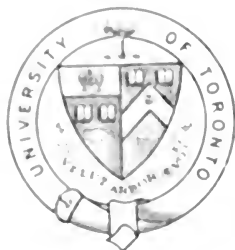


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LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE /

JULY, 1899



THE FOX-WOMAN

BY

JOHN LUTHER LONG

//1

AUTHOR OF MISS CHERRY-BLOSSOM
MADAME BUTTERFLY, ETC., ETC.



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LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

JULY, 1899



THE FOX-WOMAN

BY JOHN LUTHER LONG

Author of Miss Cherry-Blossom, Madame Butterfly, etc.

I.

THE ARTIST WHO ADORED COLOR.

BLITHE as the sunshine, as the flowers, as the scented air of his adored Satsuma was Marushida the Little. For he had no care. Think of that a moment—no care! Except to sit, when the mood was on, upon his jolly heels and paint upon those vases of Satsuma, which you have perhaps seen, those superb portraits, which you have also doubtless seen, of the goddess of the sun and of the Fox-Woman, the beautiful vampire who, having been given no soul, vengefully preys upon the souls of men. And this, if it might have been care to you, was only joy to him. Rather, it was the thing for which he altogether lived—as all his ancestors had done for a thousand years. And, indeed, in Japan, if one understood it (and I have not time to explain it here), a thousand years is not such an extraordinary matter in the way of an ancestry. There are other—and longer—lines than this. And to live for one's art, in Japan, is precisely what is expected of one. If one's ancestors have been artists, one must so live. It is the price of eternal life. To abandon one's ancestors is to be left without guides through the mazes which lead to the other world; and without sponsors there if one could arrive alone.

Well, the painting was not quite all. Sometimes—not often—his best loved deity was busy elsewhere, and his inspiration would flag a little. (He could not paint without that buoyancy of nerve which we

call inspiration.) Then it was his morning-glories, of which you have also possibly heard, for a little while. Back there in the tiny garden, where you with American boots on would be afraid to tread for fear of disturbing the balance of something, they were. The flowers he cared for most in all that flower land,—because of their daintiness and evanescence and fragility. He was an artist, remember. And his skill with them was something marvellous. The world heard of them—as far as Kagoshima—and wished to see them. But the crooked little artist disliked the world; so when it came he put up the amado and went to bed till it departed. Then he took Yasakuji into the garden with the greatest glee. It was Yasakuji who would help to put up the amado.

He was a big Satsuma 'riki'-man who had worn himself out in the treaty-ports pushing west-ocean men about at the rate of seven miles an hour, and had come home to die. He was the only person besides Marushida who ever saw the famous flowers. They would have little five-o'clock-in-the-morning parties to see them open and close—and to catch them with the dew on—parties for two. That is the only time, I regret to say, when morning-glories receive—five o'clock in the morning. Pray dismiss from your mind the picture of your own morning-glories. Besides Marushida's they are canaille.

You perceive that he was quite solitary, except for the painting, the flowers, and Yasakuji. But he was, nevertheless, quite happy; that is to say, upon reflection, he was absolutely content. Perhaps happiness is a more vivid and aggressive thing. Perhaps content is passive, happiness avid. But, certainly, if you had asked Marushida what yet he required to complete his content he would have smiled—and his smile was, I think, the finest thing about him, perhaps the only thing about him which was fine—and shook his huge head; and, maybe, have shrugged his shoulders. He really did not know or care. So, you see, he was content.

And yet it was scarcely a comradeship between him and Yasakuji. The 'riki'-man had not a single artistic idea in his head. He liked the painting and the morning-glories—yes. But it was only because Marushida made them both. Still, an observer would have sworn that there had never been two better friends,—never! And he would have been right, notwithstanding what I have said above. For it was a matter of the soul to the 'riki'-man, and even if the artist did not always go so deeply he revered the depth of the love of his friend and returned it fully. And sometimes in an odd moment he would fancy what it would be like to do without him—and of this he did not like to think. His face was ugly, his manners bad, his speech often uncouth, his cough frightful,—annoying when it could not be suppressed, as sometimes happened,—but in the curiously beautiful old eyes the artist

saw a love which would have paused at no sacrifice for him, and he loved the soul of the sick 'riki'-man in return—and, indeed, sometimes felt that he would be quite willing to make certain sacrifices for Yasakuji. To see them together one would have known at once that they were the best friends possible. One was tall and thin and ill—the other short and crooked as the Ni-O and a marvel of strength withal. And you would have perceived that each had some reliance upon the other for something he lacked—making together, perhaps, but one complete and stalwart man. Sometimes, when the artist was in the curious dryad humor which now and then possessed him, their commerce was quite lover-like; and yet, though Yasakuji was some twenty years older than Marushida, he always yielded to the little artist—as the adorer will always yield to the adored, as the sweeter intelligence will always yield to the more animal one where they differ. Not because Yasakuji did not frequently know that he yielded to the wrong, but because sweetness is always weak, and because it abhors pain. And to Yasakuji it was physical pain to see the face of the artist frown at him.

Back to the painting for a moment again, if you please; for this, to Western notions, was the most permanent of his two occupations. We should probably have called one work—the other play. But to Marushida neither of them was work, nor yet exactly play. He would not have been able quite to explain it. But they were distinct parts of his life, as breathing and eating were. If you took them away, or either of them, he would very likely have died. Yasakuji went a little further with the rather esoteric matter.

"They"—he waved his hand first at the vases, then at the flowers—"are thy soul, good one."

He growled affectionately down in his hollow chest where the cough was, and the artist said:

"Alas, distressed Yasakuji! And what then is *thy* soul?"

"Thee and thy belongings," said the 'riki'-man.

"For that I pity thee," said the artist.

"Then see that thou dost not destroy me before my time."

"Ah, but how could that happen?" asked Marushida.

"By neglect."

The little artist stared uncomprehendingly.

"Thy soul is in thy painting and thy flowers, happy fellow, as some men's are in a beautiful tree or rock. Mine, most miserable, is in thee. What destroys them destroys thee, and hence also me. Every man's soul lives in and for and of something else. That is the law of majestic Shaka. When the something else perishes, perishes also the soul there-out."

The little artist nodded.

"Be not afraid, pious one. The brush shall not stop till death

enter at the door. And thou shalt strew the flowers upon my humble coffin some early morning. These are more certain to go on than the blood in my temples. What do you think, noble one?"

Yasakuji growled amiably, and the thing which in another man would have been a smile fled across his face.

II.

THE GODDESS AND THE VAMPIRE.

OF the two he liked best to paint the Sun-Goddess, because that was a labor of pure joy; and the scene he preferred was her coming back, for then he could make her the glowing centre of a splendid composition. You remember that her father, old Izaniga, away back in the Beginning, bequeathed her when he died, because he loved her best, the sun. And you remember, further, how her drunken brother, Susanoö, —to whom had been bequeathed but the damp sea, which he detested,—rushed up to the sun, after an uncomfortable night on the sea, and into his sister's chamber, where she and her maids were weaving gold-cloth, killed the maids, smashed the furniture, and drove his sister to take refuge in a cave, taking with her, much to his regret, the light, and leaving his nether world in darkness.

For the old fellows—they who have written the romance of Japan in Chinese ideographs and called it history—tell us that daylight is nothing more nor less than the light of her eyes—the opening of them day, the closing of them night. And then, after a long time (her brother having been driven back to the earth), her fear passed away and they were able to deceive her forth and close the cave forever against her. This was the scene. The background was a glowering cliff. Its centre was the cave. Glowing in its black mouth was the superb white goddess. Already the light, radiating from her in broad bands, was timorously pushing back the vast, intrenched night. Back of her, concealed in the blackness, stood Benten-Sama, the Japanese Hercules, with a huge stone in his arms which he meant to hurl into the mouth of the cave a moment later, when she had been decoyed a little further forth, so that she might never change her mind (as a woman will) and return. (What delight the dwarf artist took in the knotted muscles of Benten!) Below were the crowing cock, the burning fire, the drummer and his drums, the bewitching nude dancer, Uzume, and last, but very far from least, the mirror into which they were artfully inviting her to look that she might see a being even fairer than herself. And they sang:

" Gods, behold the cavern-door!
Majesty appears once more!"

Their artifices were about to succeed. The lovely goddess, enough of a woman, nevertheless, to be a ready prey to that curiosity upon which they had but too justly counted, was bending a little forward to look into the mirror. Her eyes were widely full of question of the being she was to see there. Who could be fairer than she? The Fox-Woman was wondrously beautiful. But surely men could see that *she* had no soul; and it was the soul that made one beautiful, not the mere lips and eyes and cheeks and hair. Else would brass and stone be as beautiful as the breathing body. Who could be fairer than the goddess of the sun? Benten gripped his huge stone more firmly; an expectant hush was upon the group below; the drummer poised his sticks, the dancer stood on one foot, the cocks stood agape, the flame of the fire flared upward in a straight column. Was it to be light or darkness forever after that one little moment? And the crooked little artist made you feel all this—and more, vastly more, than I can translate. Mythology lived for you in the moment you spent over this painted scene.

Well, he would paint all that—all but the face of the splendid goddess, leaving that to lavish his soul upon at the last.

As to the Fox-Woman, that was less difficult, and, as I have said, not quite so joyous a performance. Yet he liked to paint her because in secret he adored color, and he might put color into the face of the Fox-Woman and in her eyes and hair. The color he liked best for her eyes was the marvellous purple of a certain one of his morning-glories with the dew on it; it was his best beloved. For her lips, the scarlet of a poppy he had once found at the monastery on the mountain; as for her hair, that was the color of brass; and he made her brows to "beetle"—a little—and her nose to "tilt"—a little—as he had been taught the brows and noses of the west-ocean people did. But he could not make her other than beautiful, for he had never learned to paint ugliness and never wished to. Beauty was the same as joy, ugliness the same as pain, to him. For the rest, he had only to remember that the Fox-Woman had no soul, that she smiled always, and that she must be very beautiful, but, nevertheless, as brass and stone are beautiful perhaps. For this was the first of her bewitchments. After this was her voice, which he somehow made you hear; then her touch, which he somehow made you feel; then, at the last, her smile. With these she won and took and devoured men's souls—who had none of her own. So enchanting, so alluring, had the gods designed this arch temptress, that when she came in the guise of a woman, to stop and look upon her face was soul-death. For then one listened for her voice, like the far-away temple bells; and halted for her touch, like vapors of the poppy; and looked for her smile, like the morning sun over the sea; and after that it mattered not,—for one's soul was gone. And one scarce remem-

bered, before one shortly died, that her smile was evanescent as the wind, that her touch was inhuman as the stones of the pavement, that her voice was but a lure.

And the scene of this was the shape of a shrunken man kneeling at her feet. And the artist made one to know that he had looked upon her face, had waited to be touched, had listened for her voice, and looked upon her smile. His head was lowly bowed, and there was terror lurking near—the terror of a man who has lost his soul for a beautiful woman. She was looking back. The smile of the history-writers was on her face. The butterfly, which meant the soul of the kneeling one, was on the tip of her upraised, mocking finger.

III.

MEANT BY THE GODS BUT TO MAKE JOY.

BUT Yasakuji sometimes found his friend brooding, as an artist nature will now and then, and sometimes a mood intervene, as moods will occasionally intervene—and from these he ignorantly fancied that he lacked gayety, that element without which no Japanese life can be complete. For a long time he considered how he might mend this, and make his life more gay but not less useful and beautiful.

Then one night, while he sat by the hibachi with his cold pipe between his fingers in the dark—he loved the darkness there and feared it elsewhere—it was suddenly quite plain.

He rose smiling, and, approaching a partition of shoji more opaque than usual in Japanese houses, he softly pushed one aside.

A young girl was within at an embroidery frame. It had been done so stealthily that she did not look up. Her head was bent, and the tinted paper of the andon shed a rose light upon her. The pretty hands flitted in and out at her work. Yasakuji watched her a long while, a splendid smile of affection upon his emaciated face. The room was a maiden's pretty bower. Outside it was squalid and dark; but here was the glowing heart of the house: this mattered—nothing else did.

Presently the girl looked up and smiled in his direction.

"Ah," she said, "I thought some one was looking on. Shall I come to you? Is there anything you need?"

"Not I," Yasakuji smiled to her. "I have you back, little daughter, and I have my friend, the little artist. I need nothing. But *he* needs——"

She had resumed her work. Yasakuji took another minute or two to adore the pretty picture, then he took a seat in front of her.

"Put down your work and let us talk of him," he said then.

"The artist?"

She put her frame aside.

"Yes. He is content, but not happy."

The girl nodded.

"He must be made happy; otherwise his soul will corrode and he will paint no more. I see it growing upon him now. He eats too much—and too much enjoys eating for one of his kind. He must be awakened to a happiness. The earth must not lose his hand, for no one but he can paint the goddess of the sun."

"But what can we do—what can I do—to make your artist happy?" and she smiled indulgently upward.

"Now, I have thought—— You have come back to me but a little while from the great Tokyo school, but already I see the difference. Once I was discontented at the thought of having you back. I thought you might trouble me. I, too, was content. But then you came, and I knew that there was something sweeter than content. Content is a sleeper—a dreamer. All that is beautiful and great passes by and one sleeps and sees it not. But happiness is wide-eyed for all the joys of the world. And since you have come he has also lost me. Now he sleeps and smokes and dreams—and does nothing. Suppose, then, that thou wert in his household——"

The girl started.

"But I do not wish—it is quite impossible," she began.

"A child obeys," said her father.

"I am very happy here with you."

"You will be happy there; happier than here, because all is so much more beautiful than this den of mine. There is the celestial painting, the morning-glories, the exquisite garden, the voice of the painter. And I, too, shall be there; here to sleep, perhaps, but there ever else. Also, this is but a sad place for thee—that is thy proper setting."

"And what do you wish me to do?" asked the girl timorously.

"But to make joy."

"Ah, I do not know how."

"You need not. Let the gods attend to that," he laughed. "It is in thine eyes and mouth, and thy exquisite hands. He does not even know I have a daughter. I have not told him for the fear of losing his love. I—nor you—shall not tell him now. He shall think you some one else—a waif whom I have found,—so that he shall care for *thee*—not me."

IV.

THE PRETTY JEWEL OF YASAKUJI.

So one morning when he came he had by the hand the little maiden. She was even smaller than Marushida, but her exquisite symmetry at once challenged his attention, and he welcomed her as if she had been of royal blood. He was quite unused to women, and it pleased him to think as he placed a kneeling cushion—then another on top of it—that she was not quite a woman. He smiled at the thought, and, looking up, the girl caught the smile in her own eyes and gave it back to him. That was a long step towards their friendship.

Then Marushida turned politely towards Yasakuji for an explanation—if he chose to make one.

"Her amah has cast her out. She is a pleasant little body. Having no parents, she requires a home. Mine is unfit. Can we not be father and mother to her?"

Yasakuji laughed. Marushida frowned.

"This is a serious matter. Pray treat it seriously," he said.

Marushida lengthened his face.

Yasakuji could scarcely contain his delight at the way his friend was drifting into the situation he had planned for his happiness.

"Why has her amah cast her out?" he asked.

An alarmed look passed from the father to the girl.

"Because—because—ah—because she teaches the children about the new American gods." Then, pleased at his address in a difficult situation, he went on glibly. "That is heinous—to her amah. But not to us—no. She can do no harm. The children worship *her*—not the new gods. She teaches them something out of a black book. They look as if they did not understand. But when she closes it they troop after her like the rats after the Chinese fiddler. They understand her. She must have a house to live in and food, and some clothing, and *my* house is unfit for one so dainty."

Marushida remained silent.

"I do not know what to do with her——"

Though Marushida bowed and smiled politely in the direction of the girl he said:

"But I cannot be troubled or distracted. I paint—paint—paint."

The girl had let her head droop. But now she raised it and looked at Marushida.

"I will not trouble you," she said.

The artist forgot his politeness and stared. Yasakuji almost leaped to his feet with surprise.

"If you wish it I will—*help* you."

Again the two men were surprised. They expected her to be silent. But the melody of her voice made the artist forget and forgive this, and her father was breathless at her acquiescence in a plan which she had opposed until they entered the artist's house. There was an appreciable silence. The artist noted the details of her person, beginning at her pink-stained nails and ending at her newly dressed hair. All was as he would have it—immaculately dainty. Even her faded kimono, which evidenced poverty, gave forth the subtle fragrance in which it was kept, the "flower-perfume."

"What is her name?" asked Marushida.

Again they were confused. They had forgotten about this—to provide a fictitious name. But this was quite unnecessary. Yasakuji had never spoken of her.

"What is thy name, little one?" asked Yasakuji.

"Jewel," murmured the girl.

This pleased the artist.

"And where did you get her?"

"On the street," said the father quickly. "She—she was teaching the children out of the black book. She was hungry—one could see that. I gave her some food. Then I brought her here. What was it thou wert reading out of the black book, little one?"

"'Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,' " said Jewel.

The two men exchanged smiles. They knew that there was no heaven for children.

At Jewel's birth there had been one of those tragedies of maternity in which the splendid young mother had given her life for her child. Yasakuji sent the baby to Tokyo—wishing never to see her again—thinking he should hate her. Later he knew better. But then she had grown beyond him—in beauty, grace, accomplishments. Then he adored her as he had her mother. But the world must not know.

"She will chatter."

It was the artist's last objection and was quite *pro forma*.

"She will be dumb if you wish," said Yasakuji. "Will you not, small one?"

"Yes," laughed the girl. "But I would rather not."

The artist liked that. He laughed, bowed, capitulated, and then led her to the rooms back of the garden, where was an old woman who kept his house.

V.

HOW THE HAND OF THE MAIDEN SPOKE TO THE ARTIST.

WHEN he rose Jewel saw how crooked he was. At first she was shocked. But then a vast pity pleaded in her small soul. And is not pity akin to love? As they slowly walked towards the garden and he talked to her in his low voice she thought it was quite the kind of voice an artist ought to have. She came very close as he talked, though the words were quite clear, until she touched him. Then she would have moved away. But, laughing, the artist caught her hand and held her. And the more she tried to get away, the more he was determined that she should not. And presently she let him have his way and walked happily at his side.

"Yes," said the artist, and she, somehow, understood.

She looked up at him—he was the least bit the taller—and something in her eyes made him smile and say again,—

"Yes."

She drooped her head, then, charmingly, murmured:

"I do not understand—what you mean—by that—yes."

"No," laughed the dwarf, now.

"I pray you tell me," begged the girl.

"Not now, some other time. Just now I am counting your jewels. One, two, three——"

He was touching her eyes and mouth, and now had her hands and was touching each of the fingers, and still counting.

She put the hands coyly behind her.

"You shall not. They are——"

"Exquisite," said the artist as she paused.

She looked at them.

"It is curious that you find so much to admire in—in just a hand?" she questioned.

She looked up. He was looking down.

"It is curious," he laughed. "I never knew before that a hand had such power of speech."

"Speech?" she questioned, more with her eyes than her mouth.

"Speech. It has spoken something to me which is new and very sweet."

"I do not understand," said the puzzled maiden again.

"Nor I," said the artist. "It is the first hand that has ever spoken to me in that way. Perhaps it is because it is the most beautiful I have ever seen?"

She would have denied this in the very happiness it gave her to hear it. But they were at the little house beyond the garden.

An old woman was scrubbing the amado. To her the artist led the girl.

"She has come," he explained with more laughter, "to change my content to happiness. Give her food and clothing and shelter and leave to—change my content to happiness."

He laughed as he went, and turned twice to look back.

VI.

ONE MORNING-GLORY FOR THE EXQUISITE ONE.

THE artist returned. And then, somehow, he could have painted. He had not wished to do so with such vast enthusiasm for a long while. But it was night soon and he went to bed, only to think at every waking of the hands that had spoken to him the new thing. He again wondered what it was, smiling as he wondered.

She was at the other side of his small breakfast table the next morning, and handed him his rice hot from the fire. She was in the faded kimono in which she had arrived. But her hair was freshly coiffed, and a morning-glory which she had somehow kept from closing its petals was in her hair.

Marushida returned her salutation:

"Good-morning, exquisite one," he said smiling. "Having slept well, all your jewels shine—your eyes and lips and hair and"—he glanced at them anxiously, and found them immaculate—"your hands. But do you not know that it is a heinous offence to steal my morning-glories?"

"But one?" she pouted.

"Take them all," he said. And that, you perceive, was saying a great deal.

She leaned forward and smiled bewitchingly.

"Ah, no. They are so beautiful it would be shameful. But one—just one—now and then?"

"Well, then, if you will not have them all, as many as you wish."

She clapped her hands.

"One each morning for the other side of your breakfast table. A morning-glory and—*me!*"

"How did you keep it from closing?"

"I breathed upon it—touched it to my lips—and begged it not to close."

"And of course," he laughed, "it obeyed."

"Of course."

"When did you breakfast?" the artist asked. That seemed safest.

"Many, many hours—*years*—ago," answered the girl. "And it was very lonely."

"To-morrow you shall breakfast with me!"

"Ah, is it so?" she asked, with a movement of voice and head that were altogether charming. "But are you aware that it takes you a long while to breakfast—when I am on the other side of the table?"

He laughed understandingly.

"And that presently it will be too late to paint?"

He jumped up, laughing back at her.

"Away, witch of the streets! Now I *will* paint. I never felt so strong to do it. Away!"

She caught up the table in specious terror of him and went, laughing back at him.

And he painted that day as never before. Yet he could hear her always softly coming and going, putting things aright, mending a man's errors of housekeeping—a household deity if ever there was one.

And, finally, when there was nothing more to do, the gentle rasping of her feet ceased, and it was only by the subtle perfume of her hair; which vaguely began to encloud him, that he knew she was looking over his shoulder.

She fled the moment he discovered her. But after that day something was amiss when he did not hear her coming and going.

VII.

LOVE—REST—PEACE—SLEEP.

ONE morning, a few days later, she was not at the other side of his table. He said nothing, but painted gloomily, thinking she would soon appear. But she did not, and he called her. There was no answer. When she came he said to her reproachfully:

"It is noon."

"Yes," she answered, fluttering.

"Look!" he held up his work. She saw at once that it was illy done.

"I am sorry," she said humbly.

He flung the vase into the garden, where it was broken.

"I am sorry," she said again.

He grew angry.

"You have said that. I need you. When you are here I am a god. I paint then with my soul. When you are gone I am but a clod. I paint with my hands."

"I will never go again."

Her head drooped slowly forward and he saw her breast heave. He raised her head. She tried to smile, but two tears were making their way down her cheeks. She slowly rose and began to retreat.

"Now I am sorry," said the artist softly.

She looked back, a little uncertain still.

"Because of those tears."

Her face flashed full of joy.

"Tears are sorrowful," he said penitently.

"These are for——" she paused, trembling.

"For what?" he questioned.

"For joy—*now*," she whispered, fleeing.

But presently the fusuma opened at another place and her pretty face appeared.

"There are no tears now," smiled the artist back at her.

It was true. She was all smiles.

"Only joy! joy! *joy!*" she said avidly.

"That is what I wish for you always."

"And I for you!" she answered,—"*joy!*"

"But why?" he asked, a little puzzled.

"I don't know. My soul wishes to your soul."

"I am but a crooked artist. You——"

"Yes," she smiled, as if she understood all that, "my soul wishes to your soul."

"Come!" he begged, holding out his hand. "Sit beside me and make music with your voice."

"I shall chatter," she said archly.

"Yes," he laughed.

She came and sat beside him and they chattered on now. And it was strange, indeed, that he could paint with it all.

"But where were you?" he asked.

"With my children."

"Oh! and the black book?"

"Yes."

"But what is in it?"

"It would take a long time to tell you."

"Yes. But what is the subject of it all?"

"Love," said the girl.

"Love?" he questioned mistily.

"And rest."

"Yes, yes, rest." He understood that.

"And peace."

And that he knew.

"Sleep."

"But what is in your voice when you say the things out of the black book? It is deeper and tenderer than at any other time."

"It is the spirit of the book, I suppose," she said. "It is all very beautiful. The faith of Buddha is too great ever to be understood by any one mortal. But this—even the little children I teach can understand it. It is just one word—love."

He looked upon her in wonder.

"Is it that which makes your face shine as if lit from within?"

"Yes," smiled the girl, "because it is within."

"Can I learn it?"

"The little children do," she smiled.

"And will you teach me?"

The girl's face glowed.

"I have thought that I was only fitted to teach children. And yet"—she leaned towards him and spoke very softly—"I would like to teach you. Something seemed to tell me when I first saw you that I should."

"You shall. I wish for myself what is in your eyes for the children."

VIII.

DID ANY ONE EVER TIRE OF BEING HAPPY?

You may as well understand that Jewel's chatter was the sweetest thing about that house. But presently, in a month or so, she had a koto. You probably fancy that you know where it came from, and you shall therefore be told at least that Yasakuji had gone back to the treaty-ports and pushed west-ocean men about at the rate of—not quite seven miles an hour now—and had presently come home looking fearfully tired and worn, and coughing much more, with a packing case some five feet long and two feet wide and one foot high, and that the next day Jewel was mysteriously possessed of a koto.

He came to the little yashiki of the artist the next afternoon.

"Pardon me," said the artist, "but you look more ill. You must take better care?"

The 'riki'-man laughed.

"I am quite happy," he said.

"But," the artist continued to protest, "there is an English physician in the street of the Sun who is said to be a most wonderful——"

"Poof!" said Yasakuji, "I require no physician." Then he laughed.

Jewel came in and flung her father a pretty look.

"Some one has sent her a koto," said the little artist.

"Is it possible!" said the father with a grimace to Jewel.

"Yes. And she cannot think who—nor can I."

"But why should you?" questioned Yasakuji.

"I should wish to pay for it," said the artist with dignity.

Again Jewel and her father signalled.

"Can she play upon it?" asked he.

"Play upon it!"

At a gesture Jewel sat down and ran her ivory-shod fingers over the strings. The artist turned proudly towards Yasakuji. He was bursting with joy. They said no more. And Jewel's deft fingers wove for them some melodies which set them both dreaming, for both loved her, you perceive.

But presently, with a pretty little show of independence, Jewel said she must go to her children.

"You like her music?" asked Yasakuji, after she had gone, trying to appear indifferent, while his heart thrilled.

The artist laughed.

"I like everything she does and is!"

The other shook his head with an effect of ominousness.

"She will spoil your content."

"She has done so," laughed the artist.

"Ech!" clicked the 'riki'-man.

"And made me happy. That is better. One tires of content sometime. But did any one ever tire of being happy?"

They laughed together. Yasakuji looked up at the ceiling.

"Did you ever think of marrying?"

The artist started—then laughed.

"Why no—I believe not."

"If she makes you happy perhaps——"

"Marry her?"

"Yes. Is that so marvellous a piece of business?" snarled Yasakuji in sudden wrath.

"We don't know her parents. She is a waif. She may be a mere beggar."

Yasakuji snarled again.

"She may be a princess. You have heard of the lost prince of Tosa? And 'tis said there was a little princess. What if Jewel were she?"

"That is true," said the artist thoughtfully. "I will consider it. Who would give her to me?"

"I."

"You?"

"She is mine—by—by right of her finding. I will give her to some one else if you do not wish to keep her with you. She must be married.

I have determined upon that," said the 'riki'-man, rising; "it is my duty."

"You shall give her to no one else," cried the artist.

Yasakuji smiled solemnly as he went away.

IX.

THE SPLENDID REWARD OF FOLLY.

THE following day Marushida sat at his work-table but did not work. He was watching the hands of Jewel as she played. Suddenly she, feeling his eyes upon her, looked up. They smiled together.

"Would you like to be married?" asked the artist.

Jewel drooped her head and swept a chord from the strings. Then she looked shyly up and read his face. She looked down and swept another chord—a softer one.

"Yes," she said, and one could not tell certainly that it was not a part of the music.

"Whom would you like to marry?"

She played softly, but said nothing. He waited. The music died out. The girl's pretty head went lower. It became very still.

"Perhaps you did not hear?"

"I heard," said the girl.

"I am used to answers."

"I will answer."

But still she sat silent.

"I wait," said the artist.

"You bid me answer?—you wish me to answer?"

"Certainly," he said with growing asperity.

The girl trembled.

"I should obey—I should obey. A Japanese maiden always obeys—I should obey."

"I did not mean that. You have no parents. Suppose you could choose your husband yourself——"

"No Japanese girl does that."

"You shall. Now whom would you choose?"

"Am I free to answer?—quite free?"

"Y-yes," said the artist, shaken a little from his assurance by her manner. "I do not say that you will be permitted to marry him you choose. If he is worthy—we will see—Yasakuji and I. I only wish to know whom you would choose if——"

The girl looked up. She was very pale. Her hands shook and wrought out some chords of a curious dithyrambic melody as they in-

advertently crossed the strings. But what she saw in the face opposite her gave her courage; and she was brave at the worst. She strained on something in her throat and said:

"You!"

"Me!" cried the artist, and laughed hugely. She hid her face in shame. But some tension had relaxed in Marushida at her answer.

"But, look at me. Look up."

The girl did.

"I am crooked."

"Yes," she said.

"And ill looking."

"Yes," she said.

"Why, then, do you wish me?"

"I do not know," confessed the girl.

"Then, by Yebis! you shall reap the reward of your folly—and marry me."

"I have prayed for that," said the girl. "Perhaps it is your *soul* I adore. I do not quite understand. But I have prayed to be your small wife."

X.

SO THEY WERE MARRIED—AND DID NOT LIVE HAPPY EVER AFTER.

So they were married—and I wish I might say that they lived happy ever after, in the pleasant way of the old-fashioned story-books.

It was a beautiful affair. The presents were quite such as an artist should give and receive. A furisode of pure white for the bride, a kamishimo from Kyoto for the crooked bridegroom. And after the saké-drinking there was a feast—not at the little yashiki, but at the park of the Pines near by. It was a madly joyous revel. And at the end of it Yasakuji, without having touched the saké, was so happy that he croaked a song going home:

"Happy as the soul in the plum-tree,
Bound for two lives or more together,
Asking the stars to come down,
Yet caring nothing for them.
So happy they,
O remember!"

He was singing when he opened his door. Then, with a gasp, the song died in his throat. It was dark in front. But in the back, where Jewel had lived, an andon was burning. Her belongings were in confusion. Many of them were gone. He understood. He staggered into

the midst of the daintiness. The flower-perfume had been loosed from the articles which had been taken and the place was full of it. He had smelled it often. One smelled it wherever Japanese women were. But this spoke to him. Suddenly he put his hands to his poor head and wept. For two hours he sat there in the midst of the brightness she had made and sobbed. Then he staggered to his feet. He looked haggard and ill and tired. He went slowly from thing to thing which she had touched, and touched them again. Some he held long and lovingly in his hands. Some he touched to his cheeks and forehead. Then he put them all together at one place and covered them with a white cloth—the shroud of death in that land. Then he prayed a moment:

“Harai tamai kyome tamai
To kami imi tamai.”

Then he looked once more about the pretty bower and went softly out into the darkness and slept as he could.

But it was sadly lonely. And in the morning very early he went to the little house of the bridegroom. The amado were not yet down and he went away to come again. And again they were not yet down.

“It is too early,” he said resignedly.

He went back to his own house. The andon was still burning dimly in the room which had been Jewel’s. He put it out and went to his sodden bed. He slept deeply until noon. Then some one knocked on his own amado. He listened. Then he leaped out of his futon. A voice was murmuring through the fragile walls upon him.

“Father—my father! Have you so soon forgotten?”

It was Jewel who danced in upon him.

“After seven days the bride goes to her home. But my husband permits me to go before one day. Is not that an excellent beginning?”

Yasakuji said nothing. He was on the floor before her drinking in her joy.

Jewel knelt before him, bewitching—exquisite.

“Have you not even good-morning for me?” she pouted.

“Yes,” said he, “and for every morning for a thousand years.”

“Ah, that is so much better that I am satisfied. But, come, we are to breakfast together—you and I. Oh, it is permitted. Then you are to come for some *kwashi* and carp at evening. Come! For to-day it is all to be quite as it was.”

“Yes, for to-day,” said Yasakuji, rising.

“And after to-day it is to be better than it was,” laughed the bride.

So they had breakfast together and afterwards walked hand in hand to the house of Marushida.

“Now we are three instead of two; and that is better, as three is more than two,” laughed the pretty bride.

XI.

BUTTERFLIES AMONG THE MORNING-GLORIES.

ON another day, as Yasakuji came to the door, the artist placed his finger on his lips and led him to the garden. There, on the ground, sat Jewel, and grouped closely about her were some dozen of children. They sat quite silent and motionless until she closed the black book.

"He does for us all that our eight hundred myriads of gods do for us. He gives us long life when we deserve it, health, wealth, beauty,—everything we need. And there are no long prayers to remember, but only to love Him and believe in Him."

But it was *not* preaching, for she smiled all the time. She closed the book, and immediately both the silence and the inertia were broken. They closed in upon her like a small mob of dolls,—chattering, overwhelming her,—but gently as an assault of butterflies. Suddenly she saw her father and her husband. The children saw something alien in her face and turned. Then at a signal from Jewel they flew away all in a moment, just like butterflies, and the garden was quite empty, and the air was filled with the faint perfume of them.

Jewel kept her seat, with a small air of royalty, and looked chidingly up at them.

"But you were not invited," she said presently.

They both laughed.

"But won't you invite us?" and Yasakuji nudged the artist.

"Are not our souls worth saving?" asked the artist.

She smiled, came forward, and took a hand of each.

"Please do not mock," she pleaded.

"Mock!" said her father, pretending to bridle. "Who mocked?"

"Both of you," she smiled up, leading them out into the painting-room. "If you thought I was serious you would both be angry. You are not angry, and you suffer me to teach the children because you think it all a pleasant folly. Well, if you let me have my children you may."

That evening Marushida asked with a little anxiety,—

"Is she really—what is it they call them?"

"Christians," answered Yasakuji.

"Is she really a Christian?"

Yasakuji laughed loudly.

"You can see. Is she at all changed? Is she not as other Japanese maidens are? Is she sad and tearful as Christians are? That you know is the religion of tears. Well, she has none!"

"No," said her husband.

"Nor ever shall," said her father.

XII.

A SEI YO ONNA—WEST-OCEAN PERSON.

IT was the goddess he was painting to-day. He had got to the face. But inspiration lagged a little, and Jewel was absent. He would never paint the face until his brush was quite "alive." Should it be the morning-glories? No, they, too, spoke of the absent Jewel. The shoji were open—they always were—and before him was the blue mountain with the red shrines glittering away up where the blue air joined the bluer sky. He looked up—up—up. Inspiration was always there—nearly always there! It did not fail to-day. He turned his ear to the mountain. There was a sound which filled and fitted all the rest—the temple bell. There is nothing more beautiful than the sound of a Japanese temple bell on a mountain in the morning. The air was scented. The dew glittered like diamond-dust on the nearer firs. Away up where the mountain met the sky it had become a dainty mist. A cloud began to invade the picture up there. A little further it sailed and a sheaf of javelins from the ambushed sun transfixed it. It paused, vanquished, and slowly dissipated its whiteness in the blue, and all was once more as it had been—a symphony in blues with the sound of the bells and the gleam of the temples in it. He sat with his brush in the air till the sun shot a splendid beam into the trees on the mountain-top. He was ready for the face, with or without Jewel.

But then his fate overtook him. The brush was never again to return to its work with the free, pure spirit of the mountain and the bells and the clouds and Jewel behind it. He turned at the rustle of silken skirts, and before him stood a tall girl whom he at once knew for either a new goddess or a west-ocean person. But this latter he doubted at once.

He did not do what you or I would probably have done, but what a Japanese would do—sat quite still.

XIII.

SOMETHING SAD AND FUNNY.

LET me stop another moment to make something plain. Marushida had been taught that the west-ocean people were not beautiful,—that they had beetling brows and sunken eyes, fierce noses and red hair. Perhaps that is why he did not at once suspect the girl before him of being a west-ocean person. He had always adored color, and he doubted a little whether the west-ocean people, with so much color,

could be altogether unbeautiful. It is quite true that, according to his traditions, her face was pink. But then Marushida had always especially adored pink. It is quite true that her hair—well, was it red? Why no! It was like newly cast bronze. And her brows did not beetle—not at all! And her eyes were as purple as those purple morning-glories, and her lips as scarlet as the priest's poppies. As for her nose—who could possibly call it fierce? Now where had he seen such brows and nose and lips and eyes? He could not remember. Yet they were just over there at the tokonoma, where the Fox-Woman's portrait was. Well, there was nothing fierce or savage about her, but, on the contrary, an infinite softness and richness, which at once began the bewitchment of the little artist. She made her artistic impression first—the eyes and lips and hair. Then came her voice: nothing he had ever heard was more melodious. Then she touched him.

"Wake up!" she laughed, with a hand like a flower on his sleeve. "Wake up, little manikin!"

Still he stared.

She stooped and looked into his eyes merrily. Then she put a hand on the other sleeve and gently shook him to and fro.

"Can't you say as much as 'Good-morning'?" she pouted in Japanese.

The little artist slowly put his head upon his hands on the floor.

"Perhaps thou art a new goddess?" he said.

"How nice!" laughed the girl. "Go on."

"Thy voice, divine one, is like the temple-bells."

"Dong! dong! dong!" she illustrated.

"Thy hands, most exquisite, are like the lilies in my pond."

He did not even think of Jewel's as he said it.

"Hear! hear! hear!" She clapped them.

"Thy eyes are like my morning-glories, sunny one."

"Of what color, pray?"

"Purple as the heavens where the gods live—purple."

"I rather like that," laughed the girl. "Proceed. I have been three years away from America. And it seemed as if there were nothing of precisely that sort in any other part of the world. But I was mistaken. Pray go on—pray do. You can teach American men something yet."

The Japanese took it in very good faith and did so. He inventoried her slowly.

"Thy lips are as the poppy of the priest, O pink woman! Thy hair is as new brass of the heavens. Thy neck is as new ivory. Thy——"

She had promptly forgotten him and his compliments, and, sitting down, had taken his vase from its cushion. Involuntarily the artist's hand went out. No one ever touched his vases. But he quickly with-

drew it again. His work had already lost its old sanctity and had gained a new.

"Yes—of course you'll let me see it. I won't spoil it. I have always wondered how it was done. I have always wished to learn it. Oh! look here!—look!" She caught and faced him about. "Why can't you teach me? The opportunity is quite providential. You can teach me and say pretty things to me at the same time. And I shall like them both and you will like them too. Will you not?"

"I——" began the dwarf diffidently.

"Yes, of course you will. It's a bargain. I shall begin right now. Show me how."

The painter took up the vase.

"Yes, finish that while I look on. I am quite sure that then I can go on and do it. You smile. But I am an American girl, and American girls can learn anything. I can model in clay beautifully—so there!"

"And what is to be my humble reward?" asked the Japanese timidly as he painted.

"Why me!—*me!* You shall have me every day—and every day—and every day! Isn't that enough? Me!—me!—me!"

"That is enough, thou out of heaven, that is enough," breathed the artist fervently.

"And I shall have *you*—such a joke."

The painter looked quickly up: the tone jarred a little.

"What is that—joke?"

"Oh, don't you know? Well, there is no Japanese for it. Something funny—but you don't know what that is either. Oh, well, never mind. But that is me—that is my face!" She was watching the vase as the face grew complete under the deft hand of the artist.

Marushida looked up. His own face was almost solemn. He recognized the truth with some surprise.

"Yes, divinity. One must paint what is here." He put his finger upon his breast.

And that is why the vases of Marushida came, presently, to be no longer desired. He no longer painted the face of the Sun-Goddess. And the face he painted in its stead was quite unknown to the Japanese pantheon. He became renowned all over Japan for his apostacy. He was the artist who painted the garments and all the conventional entourage of this deity and then offended heaven by painting the face of a stranger—a barbarian—a pink woman—a face perilously like that of the Fox-Woman.

And this was a distinct sort of sacrilege. He was held up to the young as an evil example—a person to be detested; and sometimes his portrait was exhibited with all those ingenious distortions which

Japanese artists employ to make humanity hideous, so that while he was more detested than any man in their little eastern world he knew nothing of it. But Yasakuji, who was again abroad and had heard it, came back to their obscurity and told him, with reproach upon his tongue and in his faithful eyes.

The crooked artist was unmoved.

"One must paint what is within, good one," said he, with an easy shrug.

"Then you have no longer the face of the goddess of the sun within?"

This was a startling inquiry. But after a moment of thought Marushida answered it.

"That must be true," he said humbly.

Yasakuji groaned.

"And the only face you have within is——"

With a common intent they looked at the vase on the tokonoma. The artist grew a trifle paler. Then he smiled.

"Beware of the Fox-Woman!" shouted Yasakuji in a frenzy as he violently left the house.

Marushida started after him with his mouth open.

"Beware of the Fox-Woman! Now, what could he have meant?" Then he smiled in a fashion to reassure himself. "The man is insane—yes, honorably insane. I have before noticed this—yes, he is a trifle insane."

XIV.

SUCH A JOKE!

BUT let us get back to the story.

A woman came bustling into the little house. She was plebeianly perspiring and did not think of removing her boots, as the girl had done. She had the same hair of brass which the girl had, but there the resemblance ended. Her lips were straight—as if they never smiled—and her chin was manly. When she spoke her words jerked a little, and her voice rasped as if she were in the habit of scolding. She stooped forward, as if the intentions of her head were always in advance of the execution of her hands and feet. She was unable to keep quite still, and she spoke as she entered. Her presence provoked a nervous note of unrest—to the Japanese a distinctly "Foreign" note.

"Now, Ali-San, come along—come along—at *once*. The mornings are always too short, at any rate. We must be at the house by nine at least, and the 'rikishas have not yet met us. Why, what are you doing? Have you asked permission of Mr.—Mr.——"

"Tell her your name," said Ali-San without the least attention to the rest of her mother's anxiety.

The artist did so.

"But what are you doing?" asked the mother.

"Spoiling this vase," said the girl with a laugh. She repeated this in Japanese to the artist, and he laughed too.

The mother was dumb with amazement. She knew more of Japan than her daughter did, and she understood, therefore, how sacred to the artist in porcelain his work is. But this artist appeared to be abetting her. He was carefully placing two brushes between her fingers. Just so they had to be, and there was some pretty quarrelling between them before it was done.

"Ali-San," protested her mother, "you will ruin that exquisite vase!"

"I expect to," laughed the girl.

"It must have taken him months to bring it to that point. It is all done but the face. And it is perfectly exquisite." She bent to inspect it. "Yes, it has taken months——"

"Well, mamma, what of it?" asked her daughter querulously.

"But you will ruin it."

"Well, how can he teach me without ruining—something?"

"Teaching you?"

"That's what he is up to," the girl explained with a laugh. "I've always wanted to learn, you know. And this will be *so* jolly. And it's been horribly dull here. He's such a joke. And the loveliest thing about it is that he don't know that he is. *You* never see a joke, mamma, till the day after. He don't see it at all. And think of having him all the time as if you owned him? I'm going to take a statuette of him back to America. He shall help me to model it himself. All the other girls will be furious. It is like having the most beautifully ugly little freak all to yourself. You remember how it was when I got Jocko? They were all jealous. I have always suspected that one of them poisoned him. Lieutenant Peake has promised to get me another as soon as his ship visits a monkey country again. And in the mean time I shall have"—she turned to the artist. "What is your name?"

Marushida gravely repeated it.

"Oh, well, I can't remember it. Perhaps something else will do. I shall call you—M—something with *M* for a beginning—ah, Manikin! There! Hereafter you are Mr. Manikin!"

"I would much prefer——" began the mother.

"Oh, I know, mamma. *Of course* you would much prefer,—*anything* that is deadly dull. But I simply *must* have some amusement while papa is here—and this is all that is in sight. I'm going to keep it. Think of the joy of modelling that!"

Another thought had been hovering over the mother's mind while her daughter spoke. Now it entered.

"What are his terms?" she asked commercially. The thought depended somewhat upon that.

Ali-San repeated the question in Japanese.

"The heavenly delight," said the artist.

Ali-San had continued to paint without interruption. Now she spoke with her head over the vase. The artist was noting its contour.

"There, mamma, you are always on the hunt for bargains. What is the matter with that one? Heavenly delight is all he asks! Let him have it—shall we?"

"Ali-San, I have been thinking of something more serious—more solemn—than that," said her mother severely. "Yes, of heavenly delight indeed."

"Oh!" said the girl, showing her teeth to the artist confidentially. "Is it anything you can tell?—in his jokeship's presence? He don't understand English."

"Yes. I have been thinking that perhaps this is, after all, providential, and that this way has been opened to save this poor heathen's soul."

It was Mrs. and Miss Carroway, the wife and daughter of the Reverend Joshua Carroway, D.D., at present upon an evangelizing tour of his wife's devising.

"And I suppose that I shall be expected to assist," sighed the girl.

"I trust that you will not forget that you are your father's daughter," chided her mother, "and—and *mine*."

"No danger of that," smiled the girl ruefully. "Though I really wish you'd let his soul alone."

"Alice!" chided her mother.

"Well, I do," laughed the girl. "Look at him. You'll spoil him before I have a chance at him. You'll make a gentleman of him, see if you don't."

The mother protested that she had no such intention.

"Oh, well, a gent, then," laughed Ali-San. "Just think of him in any other attire—in trousers, for instance!—and any other environment! It makes me quite ill."

Mrs. Carroway made swift devoir to the art-instinct of her daughter.

"But," she went on misunderstandingly, "if he is a rather poor specimen, his soul is worth saving—yes, his soul is worth saving if his body isn't."

The dwarf looked suddenly into her eyes in a startled fashion. Something within answered the look.

"Are you sure he does not understand English?" whispered the mother.

"Quite," laughed Alice. "I wish he did. It is so much more work as it is. And if I am to assist——"

"Alice!" chided her mother again.

"It's not as much of a bargain as I thought it," sighed the girl wearily. "Mamma, you've spoiled it already. You'll have him in a tall hat before you quit."

"Our souls are all alike. His, my daughter, is as precious—as—as"—it was not easy to say, but she said it with evangelical courage—"mine."

"Or mine?" laughed her daughter.

She looked at that fresh young vision of pink and yellow and blue and white, and then at the hunchback, and hastened away.

"Try and be at the house by nine," she said as she went. "I will send the 'rikisha here."

Her daughter had raised a question by her laughing query which would not down at once.

"Our souls *are* all alike!" she repeated savagely.

But still she saw the splendid yellow head bent near the ugly dark one of the crooked artist. Something repelled the suggestion of equality between them in any sense.

"Our souls are *all* alike!" she said once more, as if to some embattled adversary.

Ali-San expounded this saying to the artist. He liked it. It meant, she explained, that one's outside did not matter—it was only the soul that was important.

But then she laughed a little as she left him.

But afterwards the artist thought he understood why she cared for him—she saw only his soul.

XV.

BETWEEN THE OPENING AND CLOSING OF THE SHOJI.

THEN came Jewel, coyly and vastly frightened, peeping from behind the shoji—where, in fact, she had been a long time.

"Sh!" She held up her finger, lifted her kimono, and stepped cautiously forth, looked all about, as if there were some danger near, then approached. "Has she gone?—the great—great pink-face? So tall,"—she reached liberally upward,—"*so beautiful*"—she pointed to the picture of the Fox-Woman—"or, perhaps, so"—to that of *Ama-terasu*—"no, not beautiful like a goddess—not like a goddess. Like stone and metal that is soulless. But with a voice like the bells and a

smile like the sunshine—when it has grown lifeless, if that could be—the sunshine of winter. And, after all that, may I—just little I—who have no beauty and no voice and no smile, only beautiful hands, come in to you?”

She smiled engagingly and played at a vast timidity with him. She expected him immediately to take her hands and tell her that her voice was more melodious, that her smile was finer, and that she was more beautiful. But he did not even look her way.

She came closer. The smile was a little chastened.

“Perhaps after the very long pink-face you will no more like just little me?”

But she laughed with surety.

Still there was neither motion nor speech. She came a step nearer and waited. There was nothing. Then she drooped slowly to her knees. There was no smile now. But presently she rose and went about so that she might approach him from the front. He saw her then and smiled vacantly. She softly took up the painting things and put them away. Last she took the vase upon which he had been working. The face he had painted caught her eyes and made her cold for a moment. But when everything was disposed of she crept upon him and put her small head under his chin, quite like a child. There was no answering movement from him. She slipped the hands he adored into his. They did not close upon them. She laughed a little and closed them herself—with some of the fingers.

“There!” she said, looking up. She knew precisely the kind of smile she would meet.

But it was not there—only vacancy.

And he should have said “Yes.”

But he said nothing.

The girl’s face became grave:

“Are you ill?” she asked softly.

He winked his eyes rapidly and looked down as if he had just discovered her.

“What is it you see within?” begged the girl. “Let me also see.” And, as if she meant it physically, she crept closer upon him.

Then she put her face up to his.

“I will see,” she said archly, “I will see within.”

He laughed a little, and the spell was gone.

“Now,” she said, settling comfortably upon him, “tell me, and I will not need to see. For you need but speak and I see all you see in your soul. What is it—quickly?”

“I do not know. I do not at all understand. Something has gone and something has come. But I know not what it is.”

She wriggled her hands in his.

"I wish you would like my hands a little to-day. Perhaps then we should both understand. Do you not care for my hands to-day?"

He looked at them as if he had never seen them before. Then his mind wandered from them and he put them down. But she would not. She held them up to him. He could not help but look at them.

"Are they not satin to-day?"

"They are satin to-day," he answered, laughing.

"And not petaled flowers?"

"They are petaled flowers."

"And are the fingers not miniature torii pillars?—nor the nails pink as henna can make them?—nor the perfume of them as incense to you?" She turned them about to show them to him. He scarcely saw them. "Alas! to-day you do not like satin fingers nor pink nails. And yet I have made them beautiful for you;—very beautiful! The amma has been here to-day. And I told her that you did not care for things that were not beautiful. She said they were—beautiful. Even I did not know they were beautiful till you told me so. Then I tried that they might be more beautiful. See!" She held them up again, but again he gave them but a glance of the eyes. "You taught me to be beautiful and dainty and sweet, and then I, that you might care the more, became as beautiful and dainty as I could. I have bathed and perfumed my body, and all my fairest garments are upon me. You *shall* look! For I *am* beautiful—beautiful—*more* beautiful than she! Behold me, and say whether I am not. So, while you spoke to her with your eyes I made myself beautiful that so you might speak to me with your soul."

She rose, and stood before him. And no lovelier being, nor daintier, need a man wish to see than this dainty bride. Proud, she was yet humble; fragile as paper, yet strong.

Something awakened in his eyes.

"No hands are more beautiful than yours," he said.

She hastened to give them to him.

"And me—what of me—all the rest of me?"

A smile flooded her face. He held the hands a moment, then forgetfully let them go. For a little while they were silent. Her face changed. The joy left it.

"Nothing is beautiful to you to-day that is not pink and white and yellow—the colors of the tall one."

She rose to go.

"Nothing has changed," he said, as if talking to some one far away. "What was beautiful yesterday is also beautiful to-day."

She looked at him in fear. His voice seemed not to belong to him.

"Your very soul has changed. Nay, it is gone. It does not look out of your eyes nor speak from your lips!"

He, too, was alarmed for a moment.

"My soul?" he questioned.

"Your soul," sobbed his wife. "Oh, soul of my husband, come back—come back!"

Then suddenly she shuddered.

"Did she, the tall pink-face, *touch* you?"

The fear vanished from his face and he smiled in some far-away ecstasy.

"She touched me," he said.

Jewel saw the vacant smile.

"And did you look into her eyes?"

"I looked into her eyes. I look into them now—always I look into her eyes; purple they were—purple as the heavens; and laughing they were—as ripples on the sun-kissed water of the Inland Sea. And her lips were like the cleft in a pomegranate. And within them were teeth as if they were pearls of very great price. And her cheeks were as the heart of a cherry petal. And her hair as the vapors of poppy. Her hands!—yours are beautiful, but hers were of heaven!"

The contemplation possessed him again, and again he dreamed on. Jewel shrunk into a pitiful little heap before him. The hands which she had held up to him a moment ago in challenge of their beauty she now hid from him.

"Her voice?" prompted Jewel, as women will decree their own undoing, "did you listen to her voice?"

"Aye, and I hear it now." He bent his ear to listen.

"But she is gone," sobbed Jewel.

"She is not gone," said her husband; "she is somewhere within."

The girl dragged herself to her feet. The face which had been made pretty for him, and which had come to him with its adornment of pure joy, was dark with sorrow now.

"Shall I go away?" she asked brokenly.

"For a little," he said with instant acquiescence. "I wish to be alone."

She slowly backed away. She thought he might call her, laughing, back—as he often did. She was ready at the lifting of an eyelid to fling herself at him and forget it all in a laugh. Artists were queer and had queer tastes, she knew. But he let her go quite to the shoji, the opening and closing of which must shut her from him. She pushed the shoji open. As she did so she looked back. The little noise must certainly— No. She passed though and very slowly closed it. Then—there was certainly a noise. She put her ear to the paper. Yes! Only the rustling of his garments. But joy came flooding back to her heart and to her eyes and cheeks. She teased herself with her joyousness a moment. She did not open instantly. He must be punished a little—just a very little. She would make him wait a moment—just a

moment—perhaps he would call—— No! She knew that he would be looking straight at the spot where she would open. It had always been that way. There was a sort of an understanding as to that. No! Not an instant. She was mad for the smile she was to receive the moment she could open. She flung the shoji aside and put one dainty foot forth. For an instant she stood poised there, the very radiance of joy! Then she shivered and shrank guiltily back and closed the shoji upon herself. For a moment she stood there swaying unsteadily, then slowly subsided to the floor.

She had seen her husband gazing with the rapture she hoped for herself into the painted face on the vase. And she knew that her traditions had been stronger than her new religion, and that she still believed in a Fox-Woman.

XVI.

THE TOY OF THE VAMPIRE-GIRL.

MRS. CARROWAY told her husband one evening, after Alice had gone off to bed in the best humor she had exhibited for a long time:

"It is the painting and modelling. At first I was in the greatest doubt about it. But it really seems to fill a 'long felt want' in her case. She has been so restless, so ravenous for 'something new' of late, that I was afraid we should have to send her away somewhere. She was simply tired to death of everything. You must confess, Joshua, that to be immured in such a place as this is very trying to a bright and active young girl. I meant to tell you to tell her not to pursue the thing. But she is so much better contented, and so much brighter, that I think we had better encourage it. It is quite like she used to be when a child. You remember how a new toy used to please her for days and days—until it became tiresome or shabby. Then she would——"

"Fire it," completed the doctor of divinity.

"Why, Joshua!" chided his wife mildly.

He looked up and smiled confessingly.

"You meant that she put it into the fire, didn't you?"

But it was in the imperative, nevertheless.

"Er—— Well, yes," laughed the doctor. "Thanks. That is better and worse. It is to be hoped that she will not do that with her latest toy. I think she now has him in hot water."

"Why, Joshua!" she broke out again, "one would think——"

"Well—we know her, Maria," insisted her husband. "And there is no use in having secrets about her—after she is in bed. If she treats this new toy like the rest, I pity it, that's all."

"She is going to bring him into the church. I thought of what you

have mentioned, and that seemed the best way to make it safe, and give something for what she is getting."

"Oh, well," said the doctor, "if he's to be brought into the church—every one counts—hum—ha—good-night, Maria."

Without Mrs. Carroway Dr. Carroway would have been as nothing.

"Why, Joshua!" said his wife again, "wait a moment."

"You say she is modelling him. Well, the toy will last as long as chess does. *Respice finem.*"

Early in her husband's evangelical career Mrs. Carroway had gained a reputation for contention which was destined to set much of her husband's logic at naught. At one of the meetings of the Foreign Missions Society this contentiousness had become something worse. There had been a rattling fusillade of those unparliamentary phrases which women sometimes use in parliamentary gatherings. The principal wranglers were Mrs. Carroway and a certain Miss Barrymore, whom Mrs. Carroway had once fancied her rival for the boon of Mr. Carroway's affections. The difference was brewed out of the question of the proper equipment of a missionary. Mrs. Carroway contended that the Evangelists went out with neither scrip nor scrippage. This quotation she referred to the Bible. But Miss Barrymore located it in Shakespeare. Mrs. Carroway didn't care whether it was in Shakespeare or not. Miss Barrymore said:

"Certainly, *you* don't, but *other* people may."

Miss Barrymore, in the doubtful words of Mrs. Carroway, further pointed out stingingly that scrip and scrippage were more necessary now, in the days of railroads, hotels, telegraphs, and so forth, all of which had to be paid for, than they were in the days of the Evangelists, when every house was an inn and every road free. Mrs. Carroway retorted that she didn't care; that if it were necessary she would undertake to show Miss Barrymore—to demonstrate to her, in fact, and the whole society—the whole *world*—that they were no more necessary in this modern than they were in the ancient world of the Bible. To all of which Miss Barrymore simply replied that she dared her.

It was this demonstration which Mrs. Carroway, with a woman's devotion, was now engaged upon.

On the night of the famous debate she had announced to her husband in these tragic words:

"Joshua, we are going as independent missionaries. You shall be called 'The Free Evangelist!'"

Her husband woke from his nap and nearly toppled out of his chair.

"Do you *hear*, Joshua?" she demanded, flinging off her garments.

"Why, yes, Maria," he admitted, "but what an idea!"

"Joshua," said his wife ominously, "you mean that it is a *beautiful* idea, do you not?"

"Certainly," answered her spouse, at once and with the precision of long custom. "I am surprised that you should be in possession of such a splendid—er—idea. Er—no—not surprised. Your ideas always—certainly, dear, certainly. It is excellent—excellent." He warmed to it as he saw that his wife was thawing out. "I have always contended that the mission work was badly managed. There is too much attenuation—yessum, attenuation"—he saw that the word pleased his wife—"of authority, and hence of accountability. There should be some responsible head to the thing. But there never has been. Now your plan, my dear Maria, does away with every objection—every one! We go out and operate directly upon the heathen mind—at our own expense—er—you meant our own expense? We are justly entitled to the praise which success merits, as well as to the blame for failure. There are no boards and trustees, and secretaries and chairmen, among whom it is impossible to find any one either to blame or praise. Then, too, the cost of the salvation of souls is reduced to the very minimum. And, I say, Maria, I have an idea of my own——"

His wife condescendingly permitted him to elaborate it.

"We can have a good time while we're doing good. Ha! ha! ha!"

His wife threatened him with a look.

"Well—well, Maria, why shouldn't we use our eyes to see things and our ears to hear things while we are travelling about?"

His wife said that if that was all he meant she begged his pardon. And he said that was all he meant.

XVII.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO WAIT A MINUTE?

BUT Mrs. Carroway was used to coercing her convictions. Although she went away with a distinct repugnance to the dwarf artist, she knew that this was one of the things to be vanquished—perhaps by penance. This she duly accomplished. And with the enthusiasm bred of this achievement the conviction that her daughter's encounter with the artist was not merely fortuitous was made quite certain. Yet when the enthusiasm dulled a little there was still left a certain repugnance to the evangelizing attack which she had decided to make.

In the meetings which she brought about for the purpose of his evangelization the artist finally noticed the savagery with which she urged herself upon him. This was somewhat at variance with the doctrines she expounded. It finally caused him to inquire of the girl what it meant.

"It is as if she did not augustly wish, yet very diligently wished," said the dwarf.

"You mean as if she did not wish but must," smiled the girl. "I got you into that. It's exactly the way she feels."

The artist caught her subtlety and laughed.

"Stop that, Mr. What's-Your-Name, I won't have you laughing at my mother." She flashed it upon him with a great assumption of indignation. Then she broke down and laughed herself once more. "Of course, if I choose to laugh a little, good-naturedly, why"—more laughter. The Japanese was on his knees, rapidly murmuring apologies. "Oh, sit up, and be good, now! By the way, that is all she wants of you—to be good—*quite* good, you know."

"Am I not then good?" asked the puzzled artist.

"No, you are a heathen," laughed his pupil.

"Yes," confessed the dwarf, as if he understood. Then after a while of thought, "What is a heathen, I pray you?"

"A bad, wicked, horrible, terrible, nasty little crooked manikin."

"And are all heathen those?"

"Yes!—oh, no!—But *you* are!"

She shook her pretty fist at him and contrived to be speciously savage.

The Japanese looked vastly hurt.

"I did not know that I was miserably all those," said he. "No one ever called me those heretofore. I do not like that you find it out first."

"Oh, what a joke you are!" cried the girl.

"Yes," said the Japanese. "Do you admirably know any other person who is a heathen? You—you are not a heathen?" he ventured.

"I should think not! I am supposed to be a Christian."

"And not a joke"—modestly—"also?"

"I hope not."

"And what is that other—Christian, most excellently?"

"Why, my dear little manikin, that is exactly what mamma has been trying to make of you for, lo, these three weeks!"

"Oh!" said the artist. "She did not sweetly say—*that*."

Mrs. Carroway had not made herself plain. She had begun by crediting him with some elemental knowledge of the matter in hand, whereas he had none whatever. He had heard little enough of her religion. Besides, he had refused till now to see the desirability of a religion which he understood made one constantly sad. But now he knew for the first time that Ali-San, joyous, with no deep creases between her eyes, practised the same. At once his soul became avid for it. It was no longer a religion of tears.

"I wish to become that—Christian. Will you be so divinely good that you tell me how?"

The fold of a garment which she was painting interested Ali-San more just then than his salvation.

"Oh, bother! Wait a minute," she said.

The Japanese did this—as only a Japanese can—waited stonily very many minutes. And then, presently, the garment was finished to her satisfaction, and she forgot all about it and went home.

XVIII.

THE VAMPIRE-GIRL'S HORRIBLE DELIGHT.

WHEN next she saw him the clay for her modelling had arrived, and she set about it with her active enthusiasm.

"I never undertook anything with such horrible delight as I shall take in this," she informed her shrinking subject. "You know those figures on either side of the big Buddhist temple at Tokyo?—oh, what do you call them?—and what is the name of the temple? I never can remember names."

The artist told her the name of the temple, and that they were the Ni-O.

"Yes! Well, I have always wanted to model one of them. The horrible grimaces and contorted muscles fascinate me. I tried it once. But the people stood about and criticised my work so that I had to stop. There was not one of them who didn't know more of the anatomy of the thing than I did. But here"—she stopped to laugh—"I have a living Ni-O all ready to be modelled. Just a little more grotesqueness than you are possessed of, a demon grin, a few animal muscles—and it will be all right."

"But I am not like that," protested the dwarf.

"N—no, not exactly. But you shall be by the time I am through with you. Your mouth must be a little larger, your muscles a little more knubby, you must grimace horribly—oh, never mind, you will be surprised at the work, see if you are not. I can teach you to pose all those things beautifully."

She had been at work as she talked, borrowing, first, one of his haori to cover herself with. But now that the clay was ready she began to study him for a proper pose. She intended that his crooked and knotted muscular legs should show, and that his head should be somewhat exaggerated to match the girth she had planned for him. Then she made him practise grinning, and standing in the position of the

Ni-O—not quite like a caryatid—not quite like a gargoyle, something better than either, she thought.

They did this—not very happily—till both were tired. Then she said irritably:

“Look here! You don’t want to aid me. Very well. I’ll give it up. I did want it, but one can’t have everything.”

The artist looked the horror he felt. He begged her pardon with so much humility that she concluded he would be tractable enough thereafter.

“Well, then, do what I tell you—exactly what I tell you. Put your fingers in your mouth—yes, that way—and pull hard—there! A little harder. That makes the mouth large enough. Now the eyes—pull up the outer corners. And the nostrils—pull them out so that they expand.”

The artist did all this without another word of protest, humiliating as it was.

“Now, then, we will have a statuette, and it will startle the world when I tell it that it is from life. Now, while I am away, practise those things. Say—take the Ni-O for a copy of what I want and make yourself as much like it as possible if you would please me.”

That last phrase was enough warrant for what he did. She liked the Ni-O. He had, therefore, no other wish than to become like the Ni-O. He did not stop to question now, as he had done before, whether the Ni-O was not her very apotheosis of ugliness; whether the distorted features represented anything human. He did as she told him simply because she told him. And that is why, with a certain horror, both Yasakuji and his wife noticed the gradual transformation of his features. He was growing bestial in his ugliness. He had always been ugly physically, it was true, but now it seemed a vaster ugliness with no soul to redeem it.

XIX.

THE LOAN OF THE PLAYTHING.

It went on until even Ali-San marvelled at the metamorphosis the dwarf had wrought for her. And now she had begun to catch the horror of his ugliness and to fasten it in the clay. She was at work one day so intently that she was quite silent—an unusual state for her.

But while she worked the patter of clogs was heard on the outside. They stopped presently at the door, and Jewel entered. She was flushed with an unusual joy. Nowadays she was a little afraid of her husband. But with every charm of which she was mistress she strove

to win him back from the way he was going with eyes closed. She made herself more immaculate every day. And her attire was the daintiest that even she could devise. And to-day as she stood there, flushed with a little surprise and a little joy of something unusual, she was well worth looking at. Then, too, she had a child in each hand. These were like smaller editions of her small self. The pretty group was struck still in her presence, and Ali-San stopped and stared at them. But then her speech broke out.

"Well! Did you *ever* see anything so perfectly exquisite! Don't move! Don't! Oh, I am not going to attempt you in clay. No one could do that. I couldn't in a thousand years. Don't move—*please!*"

Without taking her eyes off of the charming group she said to the artist:

"Has she a name?"

The artist said "Yes."

"Well, what is it?"

"Jewel."

"Well, she is a jewel. Come here."

Jewel did not move. She had recognized the pink-face. And the children stood, facing her unblinking.

"It is very impolite to not come here when one is so honorably asked," chided the artist in Japanese.

Jewel obediently took a step nearer. The children were still in her hands. Then, suddenly, as if to save them from some calamity which she was about to suffer herself, she put their little heads together and whispered to them. With a lightning-like obeisance all about they vanished through the shoji.

Then Jewel, very pale, faced Ali-San.

"Come here," said Ali-San.

Jewel moved up to her side. The girl descended upon her and fondled her almost as one does a puppy. Jewel tried to struggle away. But she caught from her husband's face first a look of approval of Ali-San's raptures, then one of disapproval of her own wish to get away. She remained passive in the arms of the tall pink-face.

"Is she yours?" asked Ali-San of the little artist.

"Y—yes," answered he.

"Why haven't I seen her before?"

Marushida looked more guilty than he was.

"Well, I want her—I must and *will* have her. I never wanted anything so suddenly, so badly. I want her. Where have you kept her concealed—from me? Aha! You knew I'd covet her the moment I saw her. Well, I do. Who wouldn't? I don't blame you. She's a temptation to kidnapping, larceny, theft, burglary."

There was a very forcible caress with each of these.

"Do you hear? I simply *must* have her. I'll give up all the rest—the painting, the modelling, everything but her. She's a passion—my newest passion. What do you say?"

Marushida flushed a little.

"She has never served," he said slowly.

"I don't want her to serve! The idea! She's too dainty for that. Serve! I want her for—for—well, for a—plaything. And she will like it. And she will like me. Everybody does. And I get everything I want sooner or later. Yes, she will like to be a plaything—like a doll—why, I like dolls yet!—or a dog—or a monkey. Once I had a monkey. But I'd rather have her than a million monkeys." She brought up the face of the shrinking girl, which she was hiding. "Shan't you like me?"

Jewel looked long at her, shrinking away from her slowly. Then she looked at her husband. His face meant that she should say "Yes." But, as her own became very pale, she answered,—

"No."

"But you *shall*! I say you *shall*! I can make any one in the world do that. Yes, my worst enemy. And you will *wish* to like me after a while. You will be *glad*!"

Marushida looked distressed.

"It is impolite to not wish," he chided.

Jewel said softly, while she shivered with terror of her boldness,—

"It is a sin to lie."

"Oh, well," said Ali-San easily, "don't bother your head about that. I'll take her right home with me. If she doesn't adore me in a week I'll let her return. I shouldn't want her if she didn't."

The artist turned to his little wife.

"See, it is but for a week. Go then."

The girl began to tremble and to withdraw herself. The artist frowned. Ali-San looked angry and let her go.

"I shall never come here again—to be disappointed so!" cried Ali-San. "Good-by." She was about to sweep from the house.

The artist swallowed upon something in his throat and reached out to stay her.

"She shall go—for a week," he said hastily.

Ali-San advanced to possess her. But Jewel, with a moan, evaded her and flew to her husband. He put her again into the arms of the girl. Jewel, with terror in her heart, rebelled and broke away. But at the anger on her husband's face she returned, inch by inch, to the pink girl's arms. From there she held out her hands to plead, and from there she spoke.

"Do not, oh, I beg of you! I pray you—yea, though it be sin eternal, I pray you not to send me away."

There was no response in her husband's face. Then she turned to her captor.

"You, sweet pink-face, you will not take me away when I do not wish? See, I am all defenceless. You barter me who have a soul like a soulless thing. I am Japanese, you American. How *can* we like each other? I shall wither and die away from my people."

"But, dearest, you shall like me, I promise you that. You shall *love* me—and *I* will *love* you."

Jewel slowly shook her head.

"Then to-morrow—to-morrow I will come to you." She breathlessly begged it, thinking that with the night she might win over her husband—or die. "To-morrow—will you not, most beautiful pink-face, will you not wait till to-morrow?"

But Ali-San, seeing her victory won, would not.

"To-day—now!" she laughed. "I want to begin to love you at once!"

Jewel again tried to get away. Her husband savagely put up a hand.

"To-day! Now!" he said in Ali-San's words.

The little wife looked from the one pitiless face to the laughing other, and then clutched at the place of her heart. Her eyes closed and she slowly subsided into a limp heap before Ali-San.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Ali-San, getting quickly away and leaving her on the floor. "Does she have—fits?"

The ears of the little Japanese heard this, though her eyes were still closed. She waited in hope that her husband would confirm this. It would have saved her. But he did not.

"No, divine one," he said. "I never saw her like that before. She is only overcome—perhaps with inward gratitude."

The pink-face laughed.

"No, not that."

The girl crept painfully, uncertainly over to her husband.

"Tell her I am ill—oh, very, very ill. Tell her I am ill to-day. And that to-morrow I shall be well—quite well. And then— Oh, tell her, at least, that I am ill to-day. For the sake of God, who is kind to all, tell her."

"It is a sin to lie," said her husband, callously quoting her.

The little wife bowed her head and said no more. But now the husband was touched by her attitude. After all, she was very lovely—the very admiration of Ali-San told him that—yes, the pink-face was right, she was exquisite. So he said:

"It is true that she is ill to-day. To-morrow, divine one, she will be awfully well, and then she will come to you. I myself will bring her."

"Oh, well," pouted the pink-face, "I don't want a sick maid—I

mean plaything—of course. To-morrow, then, and no further postponement. What a pair of extremes you two are!—you the most eminent grotesque I have ever seen—a perfect gargoyle—she most exquisite! Beauty and the Beast in a new edition!”

XX.

THE HOMICIDE OF DAINTINESS.

WHEN she was gone Jewel slowly sat up.

“Do you wish me—*me*—to go to her—*wish me*?” she asked, not looking up.

Her husband did not speak. She was not sure he had heard her. Again his eyes were fixed, vision-like, upon the space Ali-San had occupied.

“Do you wish me to go?” repeated the girl, coming still closer to him.

He looked down rememberingly upon her. He drew in his breath, Japanese-like.

“Yes, exquisite one,” he said, with a smile that was meant to be kind, but out of which the soul had gone.

“Oh, life of me! To be her plaything?”

He smiled again.

“Yes,” he said.

She put her head down in her arms and shook with sobbing.

“Her plaything!” she breathed.

“You are mine,” her husband chided half tenderly, reaching out a limp hand to her hair.

The girl caught the hand hopefully.

“Ah, you do not mean that I——”

But his look of kindness retreated within.

“I would go, if she asked, and think it the divinest joy the gods could give,” he said.

“As her plaything?”

“As her plaything, as her dog!” he smiled and sighed.

“Her servant?”

“Even as her servant.”

“I was not born a servant.”

“But you are mine.”

“Yes!” she breathed deeply. “Yes! I would die for you! I would toil for you till the sweat was drops of blood. Ani-San, I am your *wife*! Do you not understand? Ah, can you not? Has the pink-face taken your soul away? Ani-San, I am your little *wife*!”

She crept upon him and he received her. But he held up her face.

"In Japan a wife obeys her husband, no matter what he wishes for her, no matter to what fate he gives her."

"Yes," she whispered.

"She never questions. She simply obeys—obeys—obeys!"

"Yes," she whispered again.

"And I wish this."

"Yes," said the girl with a hoarse humility. "But the new God teaches us to love one another—and she serves the new God. But that must be untrue, for she does not. Christians have souls. But can you not see that she has none? I like the new God, but I cannot forget things Japanese so soon. Oh, Ani-San, she is The Soulless One who destroys. Can you not see that the light in her eyes is from without, and not from within? And that the sound of her voice is in her throat alone?" She crept farther upon him in her childish way. "Ah, Ani-San, do not send me, who have never served, to be her servant."

Something in the face above her gave the little wife surety that her words had gone home. But then it suddenly changed. She, looking up, could not see what it was. But it was the portrait on the vase which had spoken to his soul.

"I will not have you for the servant of even her," he said, for in the East that means something more menial than mere service. "But her plaything. Listen, we have both promised that you shall go to-morrow. That promise must be kept. But soon I will find a way to bring you back."

The girl sadly shook her head.

"If I go, I shall never—never again be to you what I now am. I will have been a servant. I shall no longer be dainty. You will no longer care for me if I am not."

He laughed.

"Foreigners do not understand that we are not like the Chinese who serve. You shall teach her the difference."

Still the girl was obdurate.

To end it all he said with a voice that brooked no further word from her,—

"I wish it."

XXI.

THE LITTLE SWORD WITH THE FRESH BLOOD ON IT.

THAT night late the serving-woman brought him a note found in Jewel's empty room.

"Farewell," it said. "I go, O Ani-San, but not to serve. Forgive me that I cannot. Farewell."

The ink was yet damp. There was but one road, and along that, in search of her, the little artist ran. As he went he questioned why he did this rather than let her die. That is what most Japanese would have done. Was it on Jewel's account? Or was it for Ani-San? He was not sure it was not the latter—and yet he was not sure it was not the former. But with the curious poise of the Eastern mind he felt no disturbance at this uncertainty.

Presently he saw her before him slowly making her way—vastly tired. She was in the piteously worn garments in which she had come to him—the faded blue kimono—leaving behind all that he had provided for her. They paused face to face. The moon shone full upon the girl, lighting up the pitiful suffering in her eyes. There was no hope there—only humble questioning. It was strange that he should not let her go her own way to death. Any other Japanese would—when one wished it so much. That was almost her right.

"For what have you come?" she asked first.

The anger in his face had softened as he looked into hers. For an instant the conviction had possessed his soul that never again would a human being care for him as she did. And he was risking all this.

"For what have you come, O Ani-San?" she repeated softly.

"To take you back," he said with equal softness.

Two tears started down the pretty, dark face. The little sword which women used to carry as a toilet tool showed in her obi. It was stained with fresh blood. Her husband drew it forth and looked at it.

"Yes," she whispered.

There was a bandage about her neck—torn from the faded kimono. He pressed it aside and the blood started from a little wound there. He put the bandage back and kindly took her hands and held up her face. But she drooped it away from him.

"Yes," she whispered again. "But I could not. The American God does not permit that—and it hurt—hurt me so!"

"Nor does Shaka," said her husband.

"Ah, yes, but one can never go to Him. But that was not the reason. It was because it has been so sweet to live since—since—you came. That is what made it hurt—not at my neck—in my breast." Her beleaguered little mind wandered a little. "And also, I hoped—hoped that you would not let me. Still, I had to go—go away, very far away, until the pink woman got tired. O Ani-San, can you not see that she will get tired?—of you and me and everything? It is always so with The Soulless Ones. But I could not go because I became so very tired—and the wound made me ill. It has run away down my body—the blood—and it had terror in it. Terror makes one soon tired and weak. Very tired am I—yes—and yet I have gone but a little way. Oh, yes, tired. But it seems in my soul. Ani-San, take me home. I cannot die and I

cannot be that. I will be your servant—anybody's you send me to but her. She will send me back to you a servant. Perhaps another would not. You could not care for me then. Ani-San, take me home!"

She subsided upon him, and suddenly he seemed to know all the immense tenderness and sweetness he was jeopardizing. No one had ever cared for him like that, and it was ineffably sweet.

"You shall not go unless you wish," he said, suddenly embracing her.

He heard nothing but a long, long breath of delight, and then knew that she was weeping. Presently they began to go along the damp road that way—she in his arms.

"Ani-San," she said, with the inconstancy of a woman, "I shall go. Yes, now that I know that you wish me back, I shall go, because you have promised. And listen, in a week you will come for me—you—and take me home, never, never more to part—take me back this way—in your arms!"

"Yes, exquisite one!" said her husband, and meant it all.

The girl laughed with a low and sure ecstasy.

"Then I go joyously—as joyously as if to a new bridal. And O Ani-San, I shall be a pretty plaything—as pretty as I can make myself; and even a servant if I must,—a good little servant, a very good one,—because you wish it for her—and I wish it. Yes, I can learn to be a servant—for your sake."

The artist began to sing in that croaking voice of his. Jewel laughed and joined him with her own silvery one. But presently they were walking the damp road quite silently. Marushida could not deny a certain vast happiness, in which the pink-face was for a time out of his memory.

"Almost I am minded to not let you go," he said presently.

"Ah, but now I shall because I wish. Think! I shall have the beautiful yellow hair to caress, the purple eyes to see into all the day. Perhaps all the splendid pink body of the pink-face to touch. And I shall hear the voice that has so bewitched you."

"Take care that you be not yourself bewitched," he laughed.

"Yes," she said, a little less joyously, and avoided further talk on that subject.

But presently all her sweetness came back.

"Ani-San," she said, shyly coming closer—she had never felt so close to him—"is not the weather—beautiful?"

"Yes," smiled the dwarf, looking up at the moon.

"And how the birds sing."

"At midnight?" laughed her husband.

"But something is singing."

She put her hand on her heart and bent her head prettily to listen.

"O Ani-San," she said after an instant of listening, "it is joy singing in my heart. Put your ear down and hear it."

She made him do it.

"Do you not hear it?"

"I hear nothing but a throbbing."

"That is it. Joy—joy—joy—at every throb! Ani-San, you must learn the way a heart sings! Can you not?"

Suddenly she darted her arm through his and edged about till she could lay her small dark head upon his breast. When he understood what she was about,—

"But what are you doing?" asked he.

"Listening whether there is not some little joy singing in your heart—ah, let me listen."

He laughed and let her have her way.

"Well?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, "and it is the same joy—joy—joy! O Ani-San, I can make you happy, can I not? Even if the pink-face should come no more?"

"Yes," he said.

"O Ani-San," she chirped as he led her into the house, "I never was so close to your heart before."

"Nor I to yours," he answered, more tenderly than he had ever spoken to her.

"Ani-San, you can be that close always—always, if you wish," she replied.

"You are exquisite," he said, closing the amado.

But she opened them to look after him, and, fortunately, he looked back—at the noise.

She slept that night with a smile on her face.

And he, too, had peace.

XXII.

A BAD BARGAIN—FOR THE CROOKED ARTIST.

THOUGH Alice had forgotten the matter about which he had questioned her, he had not. When they next met he recalled it. Indeed, he had thought very seriously about entering the church. All the old fascination for which there was no accounting had come back upon him. There was no reasoning about it. When he was away from her he could sometimes think of something else. But when in her presence she was the only thing in his thoughts. And to be where she was always seemed to him vastly more like heaven than all the hopes held out by the Lord

of Life to those who finally are absorbed into Him. Something which he could not describe went from him to her the moment he was in her presence.

"Oh, yes," she said. "But, really, I don't know much about it. Only—well, first, you must give up the Sun-Goddess."

In alarm the Japanese asked why.

"Oh," said the girl with vexation, "if it is to be 'why' and 'if' and 'but' all the time I sha'n't begin it at all."

The artist said he could give up the Sun-Goddess.

"And all those other silly wooden gods and goddesses."

The convert gasped. It seemed frightful to sweep away all his deities in an instant. Ali-San laughed.

"Yes," she supplemented, "make a regular bonfire of them."

"Yes," consented the artist, moistening his lips.

"Only in your mind, you know."

"Yes," he said again, quite without understanding.

"And your 'ancestors.'"

He meant not to risk the peril of protest. But this was most unexpected. He got to his feet.

"But who is going to show me, then, the way to the august heaven? And who is going to give me delectable long life? And who is going to give me food?—and drink?—and health? and—and—and——"

He had begun so rapidly that he had difficulty in stopping. But then he went on more slowly.

"Does your one most illustrious God do all that?"

"Everything," said the girl.

"But may I not love my heaven-sent ancestors and still be good? Did He have none? And did He not love them? Even the beasts love their parents and children."

"But you worship them."

"And are worship and love different in your religion?"

"Well, I should think so! You might love me"—she looked merrily up. The seriousness of the other propositions was promptly gone. He was expected to see the preposterousness of this—"or some other woman, but you would certainly not expect to worship *me*."

"Ah, that would be exquisitely wrong?"

"N—no, not exactly. But you simply wouldn't do it. Men often say they worship us, but"—she laughed and shook her head.

"I would do it if it were not wrong in your distinguished religion," said the dwarf simply.

"Oh, well," laughed the girl, "go on. I sha'n't mind. I'd rather like to know how it feels to be worshipped."

The dwarf put his head upon his hands and murmured briefly in Japanese.

"You are nothing if not literal," smiled the girl.

He had prayed for long life in which to worship her, and for long life for her in which to be worshipped.

"Do you not like that?—long life for you and me?—long life full of honorable joy?"

"Your worship would cease at the first wrinkle."

The Japanese shook his head.

"The more ineffable wrinkles the more I should worship."

"Then I suppose," said the girl, with more than a laughing pretence of weariness, "that in exchange for your adoration——"

"You shall make me a Christian," said the solemn artist, in the words of Mrs. Carroway.

"It's a hard bargain," said the girl with a whimsical grimace.

"I shall diligently endeavor," said the artist humbly. "It is true that our persons are—are"—he looked down at his own doubtfully. "Yes, it is true that our persons are—unchangeably different. But," he quoted confidently, "our souls are alike."

"I suppose so," yawned Ali-San, "though I have sometimes doubted that. But it's too warm to argue the question."

She threw herself into a charming attitude and fanned her face while the artist sat and silently adored her.

XXIII.

THE HIDEOUSLY BEAUTIFUL THING.

"I SUPPOSE I am more than ever in your debt—for Jewel, you know. Nothing could be more exquisitely attuned to my needs. Nothing is forgotten and a thousand things remembered which I never dreamed of before. See,"—she held out her hands for the artist's inspection,— "she did that."

"They are like new porcelain," said the dwarf, bending over them.

"And my hair—look at it." She bent her head that he might see. "It never glowed so before. Doesn't it actually glow?"

"The living sun seems augustly hidden in it," said the little artist, getting as near to it as possible.

"Don't you miss her?" asked the girl, laughing.

The abrupt question startled the artist. He was not conscious of having missed her. Though he was surprised when he thought of this, he gravely answered "No."

"I thought so," laughed the girl. "You Japanese are perfectly heartless—callous. Well, I'm glad of it, for you shall never have her back."

There was an instant protest in the artist's quick upward glance. But the girl parried it with a laugh.

"Oh, don't lose any sleep over it. She is no more anxious to come back than you are to have her. I told you she would like me."

Perhaps the artist did not even stop to think, so fully was he invested by the pink-face, that what Jewel had feared had happened—and even sooner than she had feared. She had become Ali-San's servant. And he did not think of that home-coming they had planned, and for which the little wife was waiting day by day.

"Now, then," said Alice breezily, "for the most hideously beautiful thing in the world."

She uncovered the statuette and studied it, looking calmly at it and then at her living subject.

"I am not satisfied," said she at last. "It is too much of a portrait. You have worked up to it marvellously, but still the human element is too present. If you could—I don't know how to get rid of the human element. There is nothing human looking about the Ni-O. Can you be a little less human?"

The artist shivered, as he always did in the presence of the hideous presentment of himself. It was always a few minutes before he could look upon the thing. Now he resolutely bent his eyes upon it.

"Is it not already inhuman?" he asked.

"It is a portrait—and that is the trouble."

She modelled viciously at the mouth, turning it upward at the corners. The artist found his own mouth copying the change and trying to so maintain itself.

The modeller looked at him carefully.

"What is the matter? Something changes day by day. Is it you? Do you change into likeness of my work? Or did I not see you at first as I see you now? Or is it I? Always one's treatment grows with one's subject. But in this case——"

She did not wait for his reply, but went on making his face demoniac. Then she looked up. Surprise came into her eyes, and she looked at her work and then again at him. Then she held up the mirror.

"Well, it is you, that is certain—and no matter whether you are becoming like this or this like you."

It was quite true. His features had formed themselves in much the fashion of the clay.

Suddenly she flung the cloth irritably over it.

"I'm tired of it," she said. "I thought that was one thing I never would get tired of. But—I'm tired. Keep the cloth damp, please, and rest your features, or they'll remain like that, and you are ugly enough."

When he looked up she was gone.

He gripped his aversion of the thing and took the cloth off. There was something almost sentient in the grin upon the grisly face before him. He put himself beside the clay and again put up the glass and studied them together. He saw where he must repress his muscles if instead of being merely misshapen he would become grotesque. For one brief moment he thought it was sad that she should make him uglier than even the gods had made him. But that was all. He never questioned her purposes or the propriety of them. Suddenly an immense repugnance for the figure possessed him. It was as if he had conceived some ferocious hatred for the shade of himself—as if he would murder himself because he hated himself. An animal growl escaped him, and it was with difficulty that he restrained his fingers from the thing. Then he caught the reflection of himself in the mirror he still held. The two faces were side by side. His own outdid that in the clay. He knew that the inhuman element the modeller wished was present. He was as inhuman as the terrible Ni-O. With a half shriek he flung down what he held and fled. In that mood he was changed to a demon.

It was the serving-woman who put back the cloth and kept it damp.

And that night he got out of his futon and ran—ran all the miles between his house and Ali-San's to bring Jewel home. He had the conviction that he needed saving. But the house was dark and forbidding. He turned and started, guilty and ashamed, towards his home. But the watch-dog was roused and bounded after him. Nevertheless, even as he ran, looking back he saw that the amado had been opened and that there were people peering out, and silhouetted upon the fragile paper of the shoji he saw the form among all of them he knew. He stopped. The dog barked viciously about his legs. He heeded him not. His eyes were upon the figure on the screen. He did not even remember afterwards that a smaller and more exquisite figure was beside her. The dog went snarling back. The amado shut her from his sight.

XXIV.

HIS WIFE TO GIVE OR KEEP.

"WHAT is this?" raved Yasakuji a day later. "That you have given our Jewel to the American Fox-Woman!—For a servant!"

"A playmate," said the artist unmovedly.

"Liar! A plaything!"

"Liar, also. It is the same."

The 'riki'-man came and shook his fist in the artist's face.

"You have sold her—your wife! Oh, you buzzard of the West!"

The dwarf laughed superiorly.

"She wished to go."

"Another honorable lie. *You* wished. Beast! I saw her weeping. She has never wept before. By Shaka, she shall not if you must be killed."

"Kill me," laughed the dwarf, "I may kill you if you don't. Last night——"

"But that she said 'No' you would now be dead," cried the 'riki'-man, fingering something concealed in his haori. "I have seen her; she is a servant with broken nails and toil-stained hands, and she asked me *not* to kill you. She said there was a commandment about it."

The artist shrugged his shoulders and laughed easily.

"It is as well, perhaps, sick one, that we did not meet last night. I am used to being gentle. But last night I saw my face and it made me a demon. I wished to kill. I should have killed my best friend—you—if you had been near. I do not understand it. But so it is. I am at times, now, but a wild beast. Something has changed in me. It is quite true that she has gone to the pink-face. A little while ago no monarch could have taken her without breaking my heart. No monarch should have taken her. But when she went the other day with the pink-face I did not weep—I—by all the gods I was glad! Yes! And since I have scarce thought of her once. What it is I cannot tell. But I am changed. At times I am a god in the very bluest sky. And then I am a beast—not in his lair—but roaming and snarling to devour. Now say what you will—but beware of me! I am murderous now and then!"

He laughed disagreeably.

"By all the gods!—this is the work of the Fox-Woman!" said Yasakuji.

The artist laughed again.

"But, O gods, it is so pitiful!"

The artist looked up in inquiry.

"I saw her come by stealth last night and put the amado a little aside that she might watch your honorable shadow on the shoji. Night by night she comes. Devil! Nothing would she tell me of it all, except that she could not come back till you came for her. She, the pink-face, told me—and laughed! Do you think the august pink-face will ever do that? Beast! Honorable crooked beast! Go and get her! She will die."

"You ask it in the way to have it denied," said the artist calmly.

"I ask it of a beast as a beast asks. For, truly, you have become a beast, even in looks. Like the Ni-O."

The little artist rose and opened the shoji.

"She is my wife—to give or keep, as I choose. Go!"

He pointed with all the brute of which he had spoken in his face to the opening, and the 'riki'-man slowly shuffled towards it. When he had reached it he turned like an animal at bay. But the animal he faced was more powerful than he and more pitiless. His threat became an abject supplication:

"By all the gods in the sky and earth, do you not see that she will be consumed? That we shall lose her? Her—our exquisite Jewel? That she will die? And that without hope of being re-born? Oh, by all the gods save our Jewel—poor little one—alone—alone! Your wife—your bride—do you hear—your bride!"

"My Jewel, not ours," said the artist icily.

Something choked the sick man. Then his face suddenly flamed. The artist came towards him. An ominous light flamed in his eyes. The 'riki'-man recoiled.

"Would you strike me?"

"Yes," said the artist.

"It would kill me—one blow would kill me. Did you know that one blow would kill me?" he repeated in a voice of agony.

"Yes."

The artist raised his fist to strike, but only pushed the sick man out of the door.

XXV.

YASAKUJI—HIS SICKNESS AND SORROW.

AND, afterwards, Yasakuji was denied the *entrée* to the garden. It was now Ali-San who was invited to the five-o'clock-in-the-morning parties. Always late—always protesting—often not coming at all—and when she did come with the sleep too much in her eyes to appreciate the flowers, though they were never so beautiful as he made them for her.

For the artist and his faithful friend had quarrelled about this too. On the one or two occasions when Marushida had permitted him to enjoy the society of Ali-San he had, to the artist's surprise, made himself extremely disagreeable. Marushida had not thought him capable of it. He would place himself before her and stare offensively, grimace at her, and put out his ugly lips. And sometimes he would laugh suddenly. One day—it was the very day of the other quarrel—she told him that she never wanted to see Yasakuji again—that he made her cold—made her think of death. And thereupon Marushida put up the amado and shut him out, as he had helped to shut others out. When the 'riki'-man found himself with his face to the blank unanswering

amado he sat down for a moment upon the ground. His knees had suddenly given away. He had to think it out. But when he rose it was to call down the maledictions of the whole Japanese pantheon—not upon the artist—he would not have cared for that—but upon purple-eyed Ali-San.

Marushida was within and heard this. He hastily took down his swords and stepped out. Yasakuji had gone. There it would have ended had not Ali-San mentioned one day that Yasakuji took pains to meet her abroad—suddenly as she turned corners—and to put out his lips at her when he did so, and threaten her with eyes and fists. Then Marushida went to see him in his hut among the *débris* of an old fire.

He stood suddenly before him and set his little legs apart. He was in his brocades that day, and wore both his swords.

"Beast!" he said to Yasakuji, "if you look at her again I will kill you."

He fiercely fingered the hilts of his swords. Yasakuji was in bed, though it was midday. He slowly rose and made his toilet. Then he begged Marushida to be seated and sat up opposite him—looking very ill. He made some tea and then offered Marushida his small pipe. The artist took a few unamiable puffs, then threw the pipe violently into the tobacco-box.

"I will kill you," he said again.

"Yes," replied the 'riki'-man with a pleasant smile.

Marushida rose.

"I would rather you would kill me than kill—*her*."

At one side of the grimy hut the screens were open and the artist had a glimpse of Jewel's apartment. All her pretty belongings had once been there. Ghostly perfumes and woman-mysteries still were there.

"Where is the woman?" demanded the artist sternly, pointing to the apartment.

Yasakuji looked up and understood.

"Where is the woman?" repeated the artist, at what he took for evidences of guilt.

"I gave her to a friend I loved—aye, loved so well that I gave him everything. Some years of my sad life. Some drops of blood from my heart—sadly needed. All the money I ever had, so that in my illness and poverty I had to labor in the streets once more. And, last and best, I gave him her. I die. But he lives, and so that he might be happy when I am dead I gave him her—all the joy I had. I thought I might go and sit sometimes and listen to her voice—for it is very sweet. I thought I might sometimes see her in all her beauty—for it is celestial. I thought that when I was ill or tired I might go and be healed—as she has often healed me. I thought to be no less happy

while making another happy. Alas! he closed his door upon me. And her he has given for a servant. She with a daintiness like a goddess is a common servitor in the grime of the foreign settlement. She breaks her heart—she dies—she weeps—she prays—and I cannot take her out of her woe for I have given her to him. Is it not sad?"

Marushida laughed odiously.

"No. She is a yujo whom you have bought and sold again I suppose. Buy another!"

Yasakuji leaped like a madman out of his futon and upon Marushida. The talon-like fingers sunk into his throat and stopped his breath before the artist could think of his sword. But in an instant his insane strength left him and he fell insensible to the floor.

XXVI.

BEAUTIFUL WEATHER AGAIN—AGAIN THE SINGING OF JOY—AGAIN THE
PEEPING MOON.

ONE day suddenly, as he painted, he knew not quite how or whence, she was before him. Each gazed long and silently at the other. A tremulous fear grew in Jewel's face—something like amusement in his. The girl spoke first.

"Ani-San," she murmured, "something has happened to your soul—the soul I loved."

He laughed unpleasantly.

"And to your body."

He laughed carelessly.

She looked down at herself. Presently she tried to hide away the hands which had once been so dainty.

"Yes," she said, "I am a servant." Then she looked at him straightly. "But so are you. We serve the same awful mistress."

The artist started visibly. It was the first suggestion of his real attitude.

The girl came over to him. He edged away a little, unconscious of the hurt in the action.

"Yes," said the girl humbly, "I understand."

There was a movement, as if she would have offered him the hands which had never yet failed in their mission of peace, but after a glance at them they were dumbly withdrawn. In the fragrant surroundings she was conscious, too, of a faint odor of cooked viands she had brought with her. But she kept her place, kneeling before him.

"Nevertheless, Ani-San, I am your honorable wife. And the weeks have grown into a month and you have not come. Do you not wish me

any more?" She did not wait for his answer, if he intended any. 'The poor debauched hands came from their hiding and went out to him as of yore. She did not think now how they were red and scarred and the nails broken. "Ah, Ani-San, take me away from her! If it be but to walk and walk forever, and to beg for us both by the roadside, yet take me away. That will be best for me—and for you. I know you cannot touch me now—I know you have forgotten what you said—I know as you do that I am a servant. But take me away."

"And break our word to the pink-face?"

"You gave me to her for a week. It is a month."

"We will not quibble over a few days."

"O Ani-San!" it was only a tender moan now. "I have been a good servant—even she says that I have been a good servant—I who was born free. And you promised, Ani-San. Do you not remember the night when the moon shone? And when I thought the birds were singing? And it was only the singing of joy in my heart? Shall I ever be so close to your heart again? Ah, not while my garments are unclean, and the oshiori gives place to the smell of the kitchen. Not when I cannot bathe and dress my hair and—and—care for the hands that once you liked best on earth."

There was a pitiful catch in her voice. And he, as he looked, saw what even she had not thought to catalogue with the rest—the worn and haggard little face, the lines which had not been there before. Something urged him to take the calloused hands in his own as of old, and he made a motion to do so. The hands came to meet him—more than half-way. But at the touch his artist soul revolted and he dropped them. Notwithstanding he remembered what she had said about his repugnance and wished to show her that she was mistaken, it was impossible. The hands withdrew themselves. The girl's head drooped.

"Yes," she said, "I have been a good servant. But still a servant. I understand. I have cared for her beautiful pink body, and even you, Ani-San, cannot fancy its beauty. Her arms have dimples at the elbows. I anoint her with strange perfumes. I roll her flesh between my palms till it grows rosy. Then she sleeps with all that yellow hair unbound—not as I do, with it coiled. For when she wakes I coil it—every day—two and three times every day. And I myself put upon her the strange and beautiful perfumed garments,—and then—she comes to you."

"Surely your lot is of the very upper heavens!"

"Ah, yes," sighed the girl hopelessly, "she has also betwitched me. That much is true. There is nothing comparable to the joy of touching her, hearing her voice, putting on and taking off those strange garments—nothing comparable but one——"

"What is that?" asked the artist, thinking to taste further ecstasies.

"Being touched oneself—being adored oneself. O Ani-San! I am hungry to be adored. Can you not? Then, if you wish, I will go back. It is not hard—soon she will tire of me and let me come back to you. But now—— Ani-San, I kept myself dainty for you, knowing that you would not care for me else. But now I cannot. She does not let me sleep or eat or bathe or even pray. Always it is 'Please do this,' 'Please do that.' I fan her while she sleeps, and while she wakes I am never idle. And not I alone. Her parents are her servants also. Everybody is. It is strange how she can find something for each one to do—always with a smile and 'Thank you!' And always it is 'Please.' And I, Ani-San, I, your little wife, who never served, am the servant of them all. But, Ani-San, sometimes I am ravenous for one——" She held out the hands again. Once more he took them and hastily released them. "Ani-San, forget that they were thus. Forget that they are those of a servant. For soon, when she tires, and already she does, I shall come back to you, and again I shall be your dainty one. Will you forget?"

"I will forget," he said, with relief that was lost upon the girl.

"And remember?" it was a pretty return of her wilfulness.

"I will remember, and forget," he smiled.

"And must I go back?"

"You must go back," he said quite gently.

"But I may rest here awhile? Yes, I beg. I shall sit here very quiet. I shall not chatter—only look at you now and then as you work. It is not forbidden to look at the great artist as he works?—not forbidden to his little wife? Ani-San, your little wife is so very weary—oh, it seemed endless—the way here! Do you remember the night when I got so close to your heart? That night I was weary also—till you found me. Then all my weariness fled. And—to-night—I am—weariness—again——"

If the little woman expected this to produce some such result as on that other night she was disappointed. He passed her a kneeling cushion, and she wearily resigned her hope and pillowed her small head upon it.

"Ah, there never was such a beautiful night," she went on. "I wonder if there ever will be again? I can see the moon now. Ani-San—do—you—remember—the—moon?"

The artist said that he did.

"It—shone in your—no, my—eyes—so that—at first"—her eyes closed in sleep. But she tore them open as a child might—"at first I couldn't see the kindness in your—face—and—I—thought you—so—very—savage——"

She slept now.

Her husband brought a futon and put it over her. Somehow she appealed to him most as she slept there. She was so defenceless—so

helpless—so small—against the things they were all creating for her. Again he almost came to the conclusion to do what she asked—take them both out of the temptation of the pink-face.

But suddenly she woke—then leaped to her feet with a cry of terror.

“No—no—no! Ani-San, no!” she cried. “I am your little wife—your little wife who would die for you——”

She remembered, then, and made herself calm.

“It was a dream.” She tried to laugh, with both hands on her heart. “You gave me to a huge but beautiful beast to be devoured. The sun glittered on his fangs, and then I felt them in my flesh—and felt my own blood run down.”

She shivered a little, then went on quite courageously:

“Now I shall go back.”

“I shall go with you,” said the dwarf.

She paused an incredulous instant, and then the joy which nothing could quench burst forth. They were outside, in the road, in an instant. There was again a moon. She surged up against him.

“Ani-San,” she began, “again the weather is beautiful—again! Oh, I just wondered whether there was ever again going to be such a night. Lo! like the wishes to the fairies it is here! Ani-San, do you hear the singing again?”

“Just as I did the other night,” he laughed, succumbing to her spirits.

“Ani-San, could you forget—the moon gilds everything—could you forget about my hands?—and my garments?—and my hair?—for just one instant?”

“I will try,” he said.

She plunged her sweet head again upon his breast.

“Yes! Oh, Ani-San, it is singing—it is singing again. Do you not hear? Can you not? Joy—joy—joy! Ani-San, it is quite like that other night. Only you do not say—— What was it you said then?”

“Do you not remember?”

He did not. But she recalled the very timbre of his voice.

“I do not—remember!” she began in an ecstasy too deep to be held in leash. “I said, ‘I never before was so close to your heart.’ You said: ‘Nor I to yours.’ And when you put me into the house you said: ‘Good-night, exquisite one!’”

That was, at least, what she thought he said.

“I shall repeat it all to-night,” said the artist.

She turned upon him. All the lines had gone from her dear face.

“Oh, Ani-San, why are you so splendid to-night?”

“Am I splendid?”

“Celestial!”

"No one ever told me that before."

"No one but me ever will. I care for you with my soul. They care for you only with their eyes and lips and ears. Can you not see that to me only you are splendid and beautiful? To me you are tall and straight and beautiful as a pine. To them you are crooked. Oh, I can make you happy. In some other life—I do not know whether the American God approves of that—but in some other life I have known you as a god. They have known you in no life but this. And I cannot forget that when our souls met before you were a god. So you are to me still."

This seemed for the first time to explain his affinity for the pink-face. He had probably known her in some former life as a goddess.

As they neared the house of Ali-San he saw again the shadow on the shoji. They both stopped to regard it. To Jewel it was quite as if she had called. And from that moment neither thought of the other, but of her—the substance of the shadow.

Presently the girl went on towards the house alone, as if towards some magnet which attracted her. She did not even say a good-night. She forgot that he did not do as he had promised. And he stood there, moving not, until some one closed the amado and shut the shadow from his sight.

XXVII.

THE THING WITHIN.

THE modelling of the statue went on at more and more irregular intervals. Now and then there was a revival of interest as some piquantly grotesque effect of ugliness was suggested or achieved. More and more did the artist shrink from the thing she was making.

"Am I like that?" he asked with a shiver, one day, as she fixed and accentuated the gargoylike curve of his chin.

"No, not quite." She looked at him and then dashed at the statue, increasing the protrusion. "There, that is better."

Then she clapped her pink palms and laughed.

"You are now enjoying that for which the Scottish bard vainly prayed—you are seeing yourself as at least one other sees you. Your exterior is being invested with the subtle qualities of your interior, or mine—I am not quite certain which."

"Yes, 'tis said," sighed the grotesque little artist, "that one can paint whatever is admirable within. But I have something within which I cannot paint—which I do not even know." He stopped to sigh again.

"That's queer," said Ali-San, without caring whether it was queer or not.

"Yes," the Japanese went on, still bent upon what was within, "it is like our Buddhist heaven here on earth—a dream; yes, a dream—of joy and fear, peril and—and peace! That is it—fear, peril, joy, peace, all mingled together. But it is more sweet than any thought I have ever had of heaven. All new and strange—all new and strange; all dreams—all dreams."

"Keep you from sleeping?" asked the girl busily.

The dwarf smiled ecstatically.

"I do not wish to sleep then."

"Better sleep, little manikin. That is nature's sweet restorer—according to the poet—or the preacher—or some one else—whom I've forgotten. Sleep—sleep——"

She hummed him a foolish lullaby. Then she laughed at him and worked through the silence which followed. But presently she heard a sigh and looked up.

"Yes, that is it," admitted the artist. "Always I have that within."

"Poor—poor little man! And where does it hurt you?—here?" She put a finger on the cardiac region.

The dwarf nodded, and wished she might touch him again. He had his wish.

"And here?—and here?—and here?"

She touched successively his head and chest and back. To each the artist gave an avaricious assent. Then they laughed together.

"Do you know what it is?" he asked with an effect of plaintiveness which rather frightened Ali-San.

"N—no," replied the girl uncertainly, "I don't believe I do. I might guess. But that is always inadvisable with the afflicted. Then they are sure to imagine they have everything you have guessed for them."

"But if you would, divine one. I ask the priests, but they deny me as an apostate. And because I forsake my ancestors, and paint no more the true face of the goddess of the sun. Yet one told me——"

The girl looked suddenly up.

"Well, what did he tell you?"

"That something has happened to me."

"I could have told you that myself—more than that."

"If you would," begged the Japanese.

"But I won't," said the girl.

"He said that perhaps I shall die of it—what had happened. That it was the coming of august Nirvana. That I am become worthy of the most sweet Death-in-Life, because perfect and peaceful."

"You don't seem enamoured of the prospect," remarked Ali-San.

"No. I am not perfect."

"I should think not," said the girl.

"No. Nor am I at peace. Nor do I wish to die. Never wished I so much to live. Nay, I was frightened when he said that I was ready for the Body of the Lord Buddha. I do not wish to go there now. For that is vastly large, and perhaps I could not find you there. And we are to have no desires there. But I should desire you, exquisite one, that is quite certain. I do not wish to not wish for you. That is how it is now I wish for you always, and that makes me happy—delectable wishing. Hence the priest is mistaken. His temple is a long way off and he does not know me—that I am apostate—that I paint no more the face of the goddess of the sun—that I forsake my ancestors. What do you think?"

"Nothing," said Ali-San, with a weary sigh.

The dwarf went on with his unloading.

Ali-San was at the still difficult mouth and eyes. It was vexatious to-day. As she looked from her clay to the subject she noticed that the artist sometimes turned his head away.

"Don't do that!" she chided sharply. "It is hard enough to get what I want as it is; don't make it harder." She went to him and forcibly posed him anew. "Now, talk if you like. Perhaps then you will forget to move."

But he was too terrified to talk. He kept his eyes straight upon the thing, which he hated more and more. It took immense courage.

The girl flung down her tool presently.

"I'm tired of the thing. I don't want it!" She was about to crush it to pieces when she held her hand. "No, I *will* do it, just to show them that I can finish something—that my enthusiasm is lasting."

Again she attacked it, and again the artist talked of the strange thing within.

"One night I thought that after I have become good—quite good—perhaps it were well to die immediately—for both to die—before other temptation could arrive, for then we should live forever in a beautiful city whose streets are gold, and whose walls are of jasper, and whose gates are pearls—together. What do you think?"

"Why, if you wish to die, proceed at your convenience. But kindly excuse me."

She laughed up at him.

"But the sweet heaven is better than earth. Your mother says so," argued the dwarf.

"Y—ye—es," said the girl. "But I shall stick to the earth as long as I can. There is a great deal of fun here. Oh, don't stay on my account. I am very modest, you see."

"But the streets are of gold."

"I have never been able to see the advantage of metallic streets," said the girl. "Perhaps that is only a metaphor. What do you think?"

"And the gates are pearls, and the walls are precious stones," insisted the Japanese, with pain and reproach in his voice.

"Highly ornamental, but tiresome, I should think, after a while—and perhaps also mere metaphors."

"But together—together," breathed the artist finally, with a fervid outreaching of his hands. "Reflect! Together! Always and forever and ever!"

With a wild peal the girl flung down her tool.

"Would that be heaven—for *you*?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the dwarf. "And for you?"

She put up her hand protestingly.

"Pardon me. But it is ungenerous for you to try to wring a proposal from me to you in that way. You should be discouraged."

The artist did not understand.

"You have that feeling too?" he asked.

"Never!" declared the girl. "I am perfectly healthy. Trust me, it is some gastric derangement, little man. Take Somebody's Pills for it. Papa says most of our 'sentiment' originates in some gastric disturbance. Papa is always under treatment for his—unfortunately his *own* treatment. And when he was very irritable when I was small, don't you know, mamma always put me to bed until he got better."

She faced him about suddenly and said,—

"Look there!"

The sun was striking fairly the red lacquer of the shrines, and they glowed like blood. The artist, who once had lived upon this and these, gave it but a brief glance.

"I could teach you forever to paint," he was murmuring.

"In heaven?"

He nodded.

"And would you expect me to spend my time—my eternity—forever learning to paint?"

And before he could think his passionate answer into shape she was gone, laughing.

She came back, laughing still, to say:

"At any rate, you have spoiled the sitting. When Jewel returns send her—home. You see it is home at my house for her now. Is it not as I told you it would be?"

She had brought Jewel with her as far as Mrs. Rawlins's, leaving her there to do that lady's hair and then to come on to the house of the artist. Her servitude had grown until now she attended her with fans and umbrellas and wraps,—and was sometimes loaned.

But Jewel had been there for fifteen minutes, behind the fusuma.

Now she came forth. Her face was flushed with something as nearly anger as it was capable of.

"It is *not* home at her house," she said.

"*Sh!*" warned her husband with a finger on his lips.

"But it is *not*. It is a prison. Yes, a prison with a Fox-Woman for jailer. I go because I must. Because something draws me that is stronger than I. Because no one will help me against it. Because you do not come. Ani-San, I am hungry again—ravenous to be adored. I have that dream—she has not. And it is more beautiful than even yours. May I tell of it?"

"Yes—why, yes, certainly," said her husband.

"Then, it seemed to me that all the jewels and precious stones in the earth were piled at one place. And at another were rags and cold and starvation—and *joy*. And I was asked to choose, and I refused the jewels and chose the rags and starvation, because there was also joy there."

"Joy? But how could you know? Joy has no form."

"Joy was personified——"

"In what form?"

She came to him and put her face down in the hollow of his bent arm. She attempted nothing more. But even this was very sweet.

"The form of a crooked little artist," she said. "One whom the pink-face takes pleasure in making ugly, and who, therefore, thinks he is ugly. Who sees not that he is very beautiful because she has no soul and cannot see his soul. For only to the soul is it given to see other souls. And because she has not lived many lives as yet and has seen no one elsewhere than on earth. Do not believe that you are like that." She pointed at the covered clay. "It is making you sad. It is ill to have that always before you. Day by day you grow more like it. Only when I am with you are you not like it. To me you are as you always were. To others you are like that. I shall break it!"

She rose and went passionately towards it. He as quickly arrested her.

"No, that is better. It must not be broken. But you shall have me to tell you that it is a lie—a hideous lie. That she is a lie—a very beautiful lie; that all she says and does is a lie—a lie; and that you, O Ani-San! are beautiful as a young bamboo."

She sobbed, and he led her to her cushions with a swift and grudging caress. But this was enough—as it always was—and she went away joyously.

XXVIII.

HOW THE HEATHEN RAGE.

THERE were difficulties in the way of Marushida's evangelization which it was hard to overcome by mere logic.

"Yesterday," he told her later, "I saw a vast chart of the empire. There were many small roads marked upon it; but among them the great Tokaido stood out easy to follow and to see. There is no chart of your new way. But tell me that which you went and I will follow—footstep by footstep."

"It wouldn't be as easy as the Tokaido," laughed the girl.

"Yes, but I should delight in every step because your feet went that way, the daintiest I have ever seen."

"That would be following *me*."

"Yes, and the delectable road to heaven."

"Well, little man, as near as I can make out you will have to take a different route."

He could not understand this at all.

"Are there more roads than one to your heaven?" he questioned. "There is but one to Nirvana. How do you go?"

"Well, I suppose we were always Christians. At least I didn't have to be 'moved,' as you will have to be. You know if one's father and mother are good—why—why, then—oh, bother!"

"You do not wish to talk of that any more to-day?" asked the dwarf softly.

"No! Let's give the subject a rest for a week—a month—a year—forever!"

He respected the cry for relief in Ali-San's face and words.

"But that other—that within?"

"Yes—if you *must*. That is a little better. But why not about the sun, moon, and stars?"

The dwarf looked up at the heavens.

"They always make me think of that within. I look up at them when I cannot sleep. They talk to me of it. They sing and make a kind of music in those nights when I cannot sleep. They caress me like human hands. They pity me when I need pity, and smile when I need joy. They are my good friends."

The girl gave up despondently.

"If they were not," the dwarf went on, "I should, perhaps, die. For always I am afraid—joyously afraid; as if I were in peril of losing something. I know not what. Yet the peril is deathly sweet. I sleep not. Yet in the morning it is as if I had slept. I rise in joyous expectancy of something, also I know not what. At the end of the day I

feel glad. I go to rest knowing that something very joyous has happened, yet nothing—nothing has happened."

"Except me," laughed Ali-San in better nature.

For a moment the artist was startled. He bent upon her bowed head a glance of quick and fervid questioning. But that passed and he was no wiser.

"Except you," he murmured.

"And I happen every day," she said again.

"Every day—every day!" he said with rapture.

The girl looked up, then laughed.

"And don't you ever get tired—of the same thing, you know?"

"Tired!" said the dwarf. "Does one ever get tired of the sun?—of life?—of joy?"

"But the sun goes down, you know," admonished the girl.

"Yes," answered the Japanese, "and there is night. But always the sun returns in the morning."

"Just like me?"

"Just like you."

"Some day I'll fool you by not arriving. Then I won't be like the sun, eh?"

She heard him gasp and looked up. A swift paleness had swept over his face, leaving it quite yellow. She had the instinct of cruelty which so many women unaccountably have.

"What shall you do when I go away?"

For an instant he tried to picture such life as would be left to him. It was impossible.

"I should go with you," he said softly. "I should have to. I could not stay. In some way you possess my life—my soul. You draw me after you."

The girl started. It would be very disagreeable to have him attempt such a silly thing. Yet he was quite capable of it.

"And suppose I should forbid that?"

"But you would not. I should but be following my soul. I must." He moved a little. "And I should follow you a long way off. Just so that I might see your shining head with the sun or the moon or the stars upon it—walk where you have walked. Not to trouble you—not to make you ashamed."

He would not fail to attempt that. It would be thoroughly Japanese.

"But suppose I should ask you to stay right here and wait—wait——"

"For you to return?—with my soul?"

His eyes gleamed.

"Yes," hesitated the girl.

"Then"—his breathing became faster—"I should stay. I should live without a soul until you returned with mine. That we might have but one."

She laughed riotously. It was ridiculous.

"A brush, please. We'll paint to-day."

She held out her hand.

"But you will not go away," he begged as he gave it to her, touching timidly her fingers. "You have my soul."

"Well—perhaps not if you are very—very good."

She walked home slowly. She was just a little vexed. Why did not people take life as she did? The dwarf had frightened her a little. The next time they met she tried to resign the office of guide into the kingdom of heaven.

"I'm not exactly fitted for that sort of thing, you know. Let *me* paint and model. Go to papa for the rest. I"—she laughed gleefully—"When papa was angry once, he said that mamma must take care that I do not lose more souls to heaven than he saves. I am sure I have not the least idea what he could have meant—nor had mamma—nor you, I suppose. Except, of course, he knew what a poor teacher I was."

The artist said tremulously that he preferred her to any one else. That there never had been a teacher more splendid. Doctrine had no attraction from other lips.

"Of course," she admitted petulantly. "But I don't know anything about those funny doctrinal things. I suppose I am what papa calls a practical Christian."

The dwarf promptly said that that was what he desired to become, a practical Christian.

"Oh, well!"—the girl resigned herself to what seemed her fate. "Next week, or the week after, or the week after that, we'll get a catechism and go to work on that. You know all I know now. I must finish this"—the statuette—"first, and really you have no idea how difficult it is!"

The artist's face lit up.

"Then am I not a Christian also?—like you?"

The girl shook her head.

"But as far—as much—as you? I would not care to be more than you."

"That would be altogether too easy to suit papa, or any minister. Though I really don't see why it shouldn't. It would suit me. And really papa's quite easy—easier than mamma. But there are a lot of other things you must say, and profess, and promise, and do. And, finally, you must join papa's church. You can't be a Christian at all without becoming a member of his church."

The dwarf stared hopelessly again.

"What is that, I pray you—becoming a member of the church?"

The girl explained this difficulty.

"Then your papa's church is not free to all?" questioned the Japanese.

"Well, yes. But there must be some certain ones to support the church, to pay the minister—after he leaves—send out missionaries, like papa, don't you know—only he's a free evangelist."

As she paused the artist added.

"To save the souls of——"

He hesitated himself a moment before the word heathen, with which he was more or less familiar, and Ali-San laughed.

"Heathen!" she said.

He added with naïve reproof:

"We think our civilization older and greater than yours. Some have wished to call you heathen. The priests sometimes do, but not often. We call you simply Eijinsan—strangers. That, perhaps, is not, after all, very polite; but it is not—heathen."

He smiled diffidently up at her, and she reached over and patted him on the back.

"It is a very polite little manikin," she said.

The statuette had languished. And it was only the vigilant dampening of the serving-woman that saved it from hardening into intractability. To-day her enthusiasm had a brief awakening. She removed the cloth. Then she looked in that fashion he knew from the clay to her subject.

"It's better than I thought it was," she laughed. "In fact, it is all right. Here, let us try a touch or two more."

She carefully posed him and set to work. But after a half-hour of quietness she flung the tool away.

"Oh, it is tiresome! I'm done with it!"

The artist hastened to put the cover over it.

"Let it alone," the girl laughed. "It will be a sort of *morituri salutamur*—keep you humble—a sort of Banquo's ghost of your worse self."

She suddenly caught up the tool and thrust it into the clay, giving the mouth and eyes each an added upward curve.

"There!" she said, "contemplate that when you are inclined to be naughty. Good-by."

• • • • •

It was a dark night, and he went to the house of Ali-San to see her shadow on the shoji. Presently Jewel saw him and hurried out.

"What is love?" he asked her before she had quite reached him.

The girl paused in wonder.

"I hear you speak of it to your children. I hear her speak of it. I wish to know."

"Ah, it seems so simple, yet is it very difficult." She closed her eyes to speak. "It is when one is filled with another. When the voice of another grows sweet and one would go leagues to hear it. When one would die for the touch of a hand. When that one fills the world or empties it for one as is one's mood."

She went on blindly, until suddenly she knew that she was not describing celestial love. This was all within herself.

"Ani-San," she finished, "it is what I have for you. That is love. Once I too wondered; but now I know. It is different, yet not vastly so, from the love of heaven."

He only thought that it was what he had for Ali-San.

XXIX.

AMONG THE CLOSED MORNING-GLORIES.

IN due time—it was more than the week after that—the catechism was produced, and the artist's theological education went on. It was not difficult. He had determined in advance to become a Christian, and he asked as few questions and made as few difficulties as possible on a way which must have been very dark to him. In most things it was the very antithesis of what he had theretofore called religion. To so blithesome a spirit, fed upon such blithesome ethics, this was one of despair. At this point he would sometimes furtively ask questions. Were there many people who believed as Ali-San did? And when she told him the approximate numbers he widened his eyes.

"And are they all afraid of God, as I am? or are they happy, like you are?"

"Like me," she nodded, going on with her modelling once more.

He sat and watched her hands. It was a long time before he woke from this occupation. For once he forgot the hideous clay.

"Shall I be as happy as you?" he asked then. "You have no care."

"Have you?" asked the girl between her teeth. "You didn't have."

"No, I didn't have," mused the dwarf in some wonder.

He mused on for a moment.

"It is not care I have now," he said then, "it is that so difficultly within."

"Yes," laughed Ali-San, "the indigestion."

He did not answer to this. He seemed dimly aware that she was baiting him.

"I thought it would be less difficult to worship one God than so many. But it is not. There is so much to remember—that which one must do and that which one must not do. I have thought it strange that there were not but this one commandment—Do that which is good, and do not that which is evil."

"I never thought of that," said Ali-San busily. "I agree with you. It would be easier."

"Also, I do not like it that I must lie thousands of years in the grave, silent and apart—apart from you—you from me, divinity. Is it not best to come back to the unkind earth, if it be but in the form of a beast, where there is sunshine and laughter, than to be imprisoned in the most secret grave?"

"Well, I believe I *should* be better satisfied," answered Ali-San. "But we must wait to be judged, you know."

"But why? Is God too busy?"

The girl said nothing. But an angry spot in each cheek would have admonished him to stop if he had seen them.

"Is God too busy?" he repeated.

"Go to papa with silliness like that," she said briefly. "You and he can spend the day at it. But please spare me."

She rose and went into the garden. And presently he heard her singing softly. He listened with his head on his breast. The song grew fainter and more faint. A long while he sat there. Then he stole to the garden. She was asleep in the little tea-house. A sheaf of sun-rays fell upon part of her head. For a while he revelled in the color it brought out. Then he remembered that she always moved away from the sun. He could never understand that—why one should ever move away from the sun. But he adjusted a screen to keep it off and then sat back among the flowers, where he could see but not be seen, and never took his eyes off her till she woke. Then he made believe to appear from the other side of the tea-house.

"Oh, where have you been?" she asked.

"Yonder, watching you sleep."

"Why did you watch me sleep?"

"I don't know," he answered.

"Better go about your business, little man, when I sleep, hereafter. One is always at one's worst then."

"I cannot. That within will not let me."

"Oh, well," said the girl lazily, "good-by."

XXX.

IN THE EVENING JEWEL—IN THE MORNING ALI-SAN.

HE sat where she had left him a long time, the place of his mind nearly vacant. He did not move or wink, but kept his poise in that attitude of statuesqueness which is possible only to a man of the East. His eyes were upon the spot where she had vanished. But presently his brain took up its functions and his body its sensation. Then he noticed that the shoji which he had closed to keep the chilly north wind from the pink-face had opened. He went to close them but could not. He peered without to understand the reason, and saw a small body in a blue kimono wedged against them. He ran around to her by the little veranda and took her up. She was quite inert. He carried her to her own room, and flinging her futons upon the floor laid her upon them. As he did so she opened her eyes. At first she was startled. But soon she understood where she was and who it was that bent over her and fixed her among the comfortable waddings with such care. She smiled up at him and feebly raised her arms. He understood the invitation and let them close about his neck. Presently she coiled up against him very happily. He could see that she had made some attempt at her former daintiness. Her hair was newly dressed, there was a pitifully crushed poppy in it, and the broken nails had been trimmed to somewhat better shape. And again he smelled the familiar flower perfumes.

"Oh, Ani-San, it is so sweet—so sweet! You did not hesitate, you did not put up your nose, you did not turn away your eyes; you took me in your arms—close—close! I was insensible, but I felt your strength in my soul. I tried to make myself beautiful for you. All the night I worked to make myself beautiful so that you might not turn away from me. My hair was made as pretty as it ever was, and there is a flower in it, is there not?"—she felt about for it—"And my hands—look, are they not almost as they were?" The artist took them, and the little woman came closer. "I had no clothes but these I took with me, and they are very worn. But I unsewed and washed them, and then sewed them again. And are they not quite like new? And the perfume—that my little children brought me. Oh, Ani-San, that is so pitiful! For a long time they came and peeped around the corners of your house. Then they found me, and now they peep around the corners of Ali-San's house. Everywhere I look there is a little black head and a pair of frightened eyes. But they will not come near. They fly from their little mother, their teacher—they fly from *me*. Because once the serving-man threw a stick at one. They cannot think it was me. And the voice in which he drove them away—they cannot think that is mine! Oh,

Ani-San, let them come here. And if I cannot come back, then will not you teach them, teach them as I did? They will come here. Here there was never any unkindness to them. That was why I tried to make myself beautiful, so that you might take me back, so that the little children might not be driven out of my heart. They are the last I have. But I was so tired—all the night I worked, it was the only time—so tired and ill. I have been ill, Ani-San, very ill. And there was no one to put a cool hand on your little wife's hot face. Oh, I was so ill that I thought I was dying, and I wanted to come to you. I wished to die in your arms. You would let me, would you not? It is sweet to die that way. But without—" She shuddered. "And when I came she was here and I had to wait—wait—wait! I could not go away again, I was so tired—oh, so very tired! And then it suddenly got dark and I slept, did I not? Yes, and then I woke to this. Oh, at first I thought it was a new heaven, one which neither the Lord Buddha nor the Lord Christ had told us of. But, Ani-San, it was only you! See! you have heaven for me. Will you not give it? May I not stay?"

"Yes," said the artist, "you shall stay."

Somebody clapped his hands outside. The artist went to the shoji. It was the serving-man of Ali-San. Both understood. The little wife shuddered. Her husband said:

"Be not afraid. You shall stay till you are quite well." To the man he said: "She is ill. Tell her, the splendid pink-face, that she cannot come again until she is quite well."

"But my orders were to bring her," said the man with a spice of impudence.

The artist answered savagely:

"She will not return until she is quite well, be it one day, one year, never! Go!"

The man bowed and went without another word. And as for the artist, his heart had not been warmed so for a long time. It suddenly occurred to him that it had been sensibly cold since Ali-San had come. He turned proudly to his wife. Her little hands were clasped and held upward.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I am praying, praying that I may never be well, never quite well!" She brought the hands down and thrust them into his.

"Oh, Ani-San, you have made the joy to sing again in my heart. Would you not like to hear the joy singing again?"

He humored her and put his ear down.

"Do you not hear it?"

He said he did. His face was full of the smiles which came so rarely now.

"Ani-San,"—she pulled him down to her,—"*I—I, just little I,*

your tiny wife, I can make you happy if you will let me. Can you not forget the pink-face and think of me?"

"Yes," he said, with almost another season of fondness. "I can when she is away."

And then the next morning came Ali-San.

She said not a word, even of greeting, but her eyes burned through the crooked artist.

And when she finally said to Jewel,—

"Come!"

Jewel got up and went with her.

She staggered a little, drooped her pretty head, walked behind, but she did not look back. If she had she would have seen on the face of the husband something more craven than had ever before been there.

XXXI.

THE FIVE QUESTIONS OF THE MANIKIN.

ONE day, a little later, the Japanese presented her with an elaborately written scroll, nearly all in Chinese.

"That is for your father, if you please," he explained. "You do not like to answer the difficult questions. I do not like to ask them of your father. He tells me to only believe. It will be all right. Well, that I do not understand also. How do I believe? That seems easy to him, but is most difficult to me. Hence I have here written."

He opened the scroll and read it to her while she painted and did not listen:

"To his most wise Excellency, etc.:—

"First. I beg that you will pardon if I ask you these about the treatment of His mother—that Virgin Mary. Did He not love His mother? And if He hate her, why did He do so? And for what cause specially? Otherwise He must love her because she is His mother. Like it is to Japan. A man would be very evil unless he care for her fondly. If he did not he could not go at the delectable heaven. Yet, perhaps that has all the time been wrong. But why? She would stand in the heaven and cry out against him. Then he never could be happy, because he never had the peace. To be happy one must have the peace. Also, to leave the parents and follow Him, I do not understand. Because who would take care of the parents? And if they die, how can one have peace again? Perhaps this is also wrong. Yet it is strange. Why not take the admirable parents with you?

"Second. Concerning the things about being chosen. If I am not

already chosen, it seems like I never can be. If I am chosen, it seems like I do not need to care. But how can one know about their birth? And if one is to not know, why is that?

"Third. Perhaps I cannot go to the kingdom of heaven because I have not the baptism when young. Please tell me that. It is of importance. Or is it?"

"Fourth. If everything has been wrong, how can it be made right? Say that to me. Can the American God blot out that which already is? And can He likewise make that which is in itself wrong right? There is no Japanese god can do that.

"Fifth. Why is there but one Sabbath in the seven days? Is it to be good on that day and evil all the rest? Once a man which was brutal to me all the six days prayed for me on the seventh. He also reviled me because I was a heathen."

The Reverend Joshua Carroway, D.D., sent for Marushida. He could not translate the Chinese, he said. I know not what art he used to scatter the little doubts in the virginal mind of the heathen. But the clasp of a large, warm hand had much to do with it. A broad and friendly smile had more. His orotund opening upon the heathen—"My dear—my very dear sir!"—had still more. Marushida began to feel ashamed of his doubts. After that it was easy with him. It was not long before the Japanese was bowing to his very feet and regretting the temerity which had urged him to question one so wise as this august ecclesiastical excellency. The richness of his homotrice charmed the minister, and as he backed out he begged the little artist to come again—to come whenever he was in doubt. He had enjoyed the afternoon, he said.

And yet, on the way home, Marushida wondered whether it was not once more simply a matter of saying all right.

The Reverend Joshua Carroway, D.D., was quite as care-free as his daughter—with a slight difference in her favor.

However, if any doubts still infested the understanding of the little artist, they were obscured by the effulgent joy which he carried away with him. He was distinctly told that he knew enough to be admitted to the church. Still, the dwarf had learned that these west-coast people did not argue by innuendo, as the Japanese did—by the mere lifting of an eyebrow. The conclusion to be drawn from this was that he was a Christian. But his conclusions upon the promise of those people of the western ocean had sometimes failed. There was but one way to be sure: he must put the very question categorically.

"Then I am a Christian?" he had asked the minister.

The Reverend Mr. Carroway hesitated a moment, bending the while a reflective glance upon the darkly anxious face before him. He suddenly understood that something more vast than he knew dreamed

upon his word. He hesitated, took hostages of the future, and answered "Yes."

And he carried the great news straight to Ali-San—that is, as straight as possible. He could not find her that day. And when she came the next she was scarcely in a mood to appreciate—or, in truth, to pretend to appreciation of—such great intelligence. But he had not slept for joy. He was so full of it that he fancied there was nothing else in the world. The import of the thing he fancied as great to Ali-San as it was to him, and she would be as glad. Well, he announced it like one who has conquered a legion,—

"I am a Christian!"

The girl looked dully up—she was at her painting.

"Oh! All right!"

"Like unto you!"

He could see her shoulders shaking, but did not understand at once that she was laughing. Then, presently, he knew this. He drew in his breath in Japanese fashion and retreated a step. Something dull and heavy—lead—had taken the place of his leaping heart.

"Am I not?" he slowly asked.

Alas, there was now an interrogation at the end.

"Am I not?" the artist repeated.

"How should I know?" counter-questioned the girl. "I sincerely hope so. In fact, I'll suppose so if it will make you happier."

She sighed whimsically. "It has been such frightful work teaching you, don't you know?"

"Your father said so," cumulated the convert.

"That is good. He ought to know. He's had a lot of experience—with heathen."

The careless word made him wince.

"I do not know all," confessed the dwarf, conscious for the first time of some gulf opening between them.

"You know a thousand times more than I do—thank heaven!" she added under her breath. "Come, brace up and be cheerful now. It will be much nicer after this, when we can dispense with theology and do nothing but paint and model and gossip."

"Nothing but paint!" breathed the dwarf, who had not painted for months. He looked at her bowed head in the adoring fashion he had acquired, and presently said:

"That is always strange and beautiful to me—that though your religion is so sad, you are so joyous. It is as if you had no care." He was a little startled to hear himself saying this. It was only a little while since he had said that of himself. Now, strangely enough, he was admonished that he could not say it any more. Something had long ago told him that he would never again be able to say that. Never!

And that to a Japanese is a very long time. But if he could not say it now, then he must have care—and care was next to sorrow. But whence did it come from? He was still looking at the bowed head before him, but it gave him no hint. He sighed. "It is good to have no care. One lives long. Your mother's sadness sometimes frightens me. She will die soon, I think." Again for a little while he studied the head. "Shall you ever be like her?—your mother?"

The girl threw up her head and laughed a silver peal.

"My dear little manikin," she said then, biting her lips, "that is very impolite."

The dwarf understood and protested.

"Yes, but I did not mean—I did not mean her oldness—and! That we prize here in Japan, the oldness of one's parent. Just I mean that she is all the time sad about souls. That makes wrinkles between her eyes like a man. Men should have wrinkles. But women not—unless they wish."

"Well, I rather guess that's so. If I took my religion as seriously as she does hers, and as you threaten to do yours, I should have three creases between my eyes too. But I don't mean to, and you had better not. I shall never have any care," she announced, finally.

"But everybody tells me it is very serious, except you. It is true that Buddha's religion is joyous. But this"—he repeated the phrase as if it were sweet to him—"everybody tells me it is very serious, except you."

"You see, little manikin, the pursuit of souls at our house has got to be like expert hunting. We have it for breakfast, tiffin, and tea, and much of the time between. Really, I think there is some mistake. I don't know whether merely adding members to the church is doing good or not. But, little manikin, I bottle up my religion on Sabbath night and open it again on Saturday night. Now you can choose which you like. But if you are not sure, little one, stop where you are."

Stop where he was! She in one kingdom, he in another!

"I choose your way, beautiful Ali-San," he said softly.

"All right. Let us rest from the subject."

"But, you will be present, next Sabbath," asked the dwarf beseechingly, "at my confirmation?"

"I am to play the organ," she said. "You shall have the finest thing I know, whatever it is. I'd like to make it 'See, the Conquering Hero Comes!'"

She laughed.

"Will you never call me a heathen after that?" he begged.

"I should think not! After next Sabbath it would be criminal in the highest degree—would discredit my own work, and papa's and mamma's, and that's very serious!"

He never could quite understand her sudden laughter, such as followed this.

As she rose to go she suddenly stooped and took his face between her hands.

"Little manikin, after the first fright is over you will be as happy as I am, then you must begin to forget the sad part."

She twisted his face from side to side between her palms. Then she suddenly kissed the tip of his nose and vanished, laughing.

The dwarf sat quite still for an hour, only winking now and then to certify himself that he was quite awake.

XXXII.

DID THE TALL HAT AND THE LONG CANE DO IT?

THOUGH Marushida went mistily into the church, Ali-San's prediction rapidly became true. He was certainly becoming happier every day—happier than he had ever dreamed of being in the days before he knew Ali-San and her religion. And this Sabbath-day devotion, as he had at first contemptuously called it, came to be the most beautiful system of salvation he had ever heard of. It left nothing to be desired. All the week was spent in anticipation of and preparation for its delights. Now, he thought, he understood what the Reverend Doctor Carroway had not been able to make plain to him, why the Sabbath was a day of such exquisite delight, why it was better to have one day set apart for worship than to worship all the days. Because all days used to be alike, but now Sabbath had a distinct aroma for him.

But—in the reader's ear—did the fact that he dressed in hideous European attire and went to dinner at the house of Ali-San on that day have anything to do with this? That when he grew brave enough he emulated the Reverend Doctor Carroway and those churchmen he consorted with most, and wore a tall hat—much too tall, and carried a long cane—much too long? And when he was quite an old church member—seven months!—and knew the intricacies of the service better than Ali-San, so that he could assist her, and had given all the little he had saved to the church and other heathen such as he had been, and would try to sing in his croaking voice, and was entirely exemplary, if not aggressive, in his religion—

Now, when all this had happened—and much more that I cannot stop to tell—the little manikin began to feel like a Somebody. He had never felt the need of being Somebody in the old days. But, somehow, Ali-San had brought this need with her—though he used to laugh to

himself when he thought of it, for, really, she had brought nothing, nothing at all—except her very charming self. But he thought, as he looked up and down her, that that was enough, more than any woman had ever before been able to bring to a man. For, now that they were in the same kingdom, he had somehow come to think of her as his, in some occult, untranslatable fashion, and had forgotten her who was his, or thought of her only when some one else did, and that with a brevity that was not strange to him, but was to all the world beside who knew them both.

Perhaps it was for these and other fancies which had grown up in his poor head that on one memorable Sunday the little artist took his place beside Ali-San, as he had seen other men do from time to time, and walked home with her, swinging his long cane a little, but not quite so much as those other men did, raising his tall hat when she spoke to some one, as they did, but with a little more difficulty and a little less grace, because of its greater adhesion to his head, which was too large for it. And he bandied compliments with Ali-San in his newly learned English. He had learned many adjectives which fitted her. But here he distanced those other men, for Ali-San, at least, knew that what he said he meant. Some of those other men walked behind them on this day and towered over him, to his annoyance, and laughed, nodding knowing glances to each other and to Ali-San.

Yet he had never been happier than on that day.

And Ali-San had never laughed so much. She must have been happy too. But those men? They laughed. And he knew that it was not for happiness. But what was it, then? Perhaps it was to hide envy, according to the Japanese proverb. He believed so at the last. It occurred to him puzzlingly, just then, that people always laughed a good deal when he was by—serious people, too. Sometimes he thought it strange. But to-day it did not matter. Ali-San laughed and was quite happy.

He meant to remember that day.

On the way home it did not seem quite so brilliant a day. At dinner he had eaten of a pigeon, the bird which no one kills because it is Buddha's. He had not done it with ease. When he hesitated Ali-San and the men had laughed and he quickly bolted it. But on the way home he began to think about the bird, which had been circling joyously in the air a few hours before.

XXXIII.

A FLUTTER OF SILKEN SKIRTS—A KISS ON THE NOSE.

AND then came the end—suddenly. The morning was quite like the one on which they had met. It had been a full year. Again the shoji were open. Again the blue of the air met the blue of the sky up there. The bells of the temple tolled and the day was very sweet. The artist was there, too—and the painting things. But there were no brushes in his hand, as then, and there was something in his heart which was not there then. Care had truly taken the joy out of his eyes, for something which he needed he knew he had not. But he knew not what it was.

Suddenly there was a flutter of silken skirts, and the dwarf put his head upon his hands. Now it was all complete. She was a part of the scene and always had been. He began to understand—if dimly. She fluttered down before him and ran her fingers into his carefully dressed hair, making it stand grotesquely up.

"Sit up, little manikin, and face your fate, like as much of a man as you are," she said, with a pink spot of joy in each cheek. "I am going away!"

The heart of the dwarf leaped up against his ribs. His face took on that yellow which is paleness in an Oriental.

Without noticing him, she swept his brushes into a pile and began riotously to smear the colors on some new porcelain, singing as she did it. Then she flung them away, tossed the vase aside, and looked at him. Her joy was unbridled.

"Well, little manikin, say good-by to me. Can't you, or won't you?"

"Going—away?" then breathed the little artist. "But you said——"

The girl felt the vague reproach in his words. Reproach always annoyed her.

"You certainly didn't expect me to stay here forever? You ought to be glad that I am to be reprieved from this—well, this hole. Not very elegant, but very expressive, eh?"

"Going—away?" asked the dwarf again.

She jumped up.

"Yes, say your prettiest good-by and hurry. Can't stand the repetition of that."

"When shall you return?"

The girl laughed.

"Never, I hope."

"Shall I never see you again till death takes us both?" asked the Japanese in agony.

"Oh!"—Ali-San shuddered. "Don't!"

"How—shall I know you—in—heaven?" persisted the dwarf, breathing as if in travail.

It made her a little more cross, and she did not conceal this from him.

"Oh, as you do here, I suppose: by my hair and eyes and nose and lips and my very unusual behavior. There will be no one else up there quite like me, I suppose." She laughed. "Oh, I don't know. Don't be silly—that is, more silly than you must be."

The dwarf's eyes painfully inventoried the splendid features he was to see no more.

"Yes," he whispered, as if to himself, "yes, by the hair and eyes and lips—yes. And shall I be as joyous when you are gone? Shall I still have this within?"

"I suppose so—whatever it is. Try the pills."

"Sometimes when you are away for only a little while the light of my life goes out and is not kindled till you return. I feel as if I were alone in some vastness full of terrors and dark—dark and cold. I could not live if I should have that feeling always. It destroys life. You do not wish me to die?"

Suddenly the girl became serious, more serious than he had ever seen her. She stooped to him and took his hands, almost as fine as her own. Perhaps she, too, began to understand. Perhaps a little pity was in her heart for him.

"No, little manikin, I do not wish you to die, of course not. But you certainly do not expect me to stay just to keep you alive, do you?"

"No," said the artist after a while.

"Of course not. You'll attend to that yourself, eh—and go back to your painting? Look!" She took a vase from the tokonoma and turned her own painted face to him. "That is the only thing you've painted for an age. And before I came, why, we heard of you away off in America! Go back to your Sun Goddesses, your Fox-Women, and your morning-glories, and peace, and sweet sleep, and forget some"—she stopped to laugh a little—"some things you have learned. And some day—oh, in a thousand years—I may come back with your soul—you promised to stay here and wait, you know. Papa gets all over. And if I ever get within ten miles of you I'll come to see you—yes, if I have to walk. Now, then, good-by, and be good, very, very good, for if you should be bad you would be horrid."

She suddenly seized his face between her palms again and darted a kiss upon the tip of his funny nose and was going, laughing richly.

XXXIV.

"WHEN THIS YOU SEE REMEMBER DEATH."

BUT she saw the statuette as she turned. "'What fools these mortals be!'" she laughed. "Once I thought I wanted that."

"Do you not wish it?"

"No," said Ali-San, "I've got about all the fun there is to be had out of it. Keep it. When this you see remember me, don't you know. Or smash it some rainy day."

"The Japanese epitaph is 'When this you see remember death,'" said the dwarf.

"Well, have it that way if you prefer, I don't care."

After he thought her quite gone, and was sitting with that stony look upon his face, she again came back.

"Oh, I almost forgot to say that Jewel is much better. What a little divinity she is! At least, she absolutely divines my wants. I simply couldn't live without her. And, as I told you, I have made a complete conquest of her. She adores me. I thought I had tired of her, but it has broken out at a new place. I am teaching her western ways. And, listen, I have taught her the bliss of kissing!"

The artist stared.

"You are not angry?"

"Not angry," said he, "but I did not think she would wish——"

"Wish!" the girl laughed gleefully. "Why, I wake up sometimes and find her kissing my hair and eyes and neck—and sometimes my feet!"

"Yes," breathed the artist fervently. He understood better now. Kissing had never seemed an enchanting operation to him before. But now he inspected the delicious lips and eyes and hair—and feet—and he understood dimly why Jewel wished to kiss them—make physical contact with them. And Ali-San also understood. She showed her teeth appreciatively.

"But don't you imagine that she does all the kissing. I began it. One day she was crying a little when I came upon her. I'm afraid I hadn't been very kind to her. And she looked so like a troubled little saint or nun or goddess—or something pitiful—that I swooped upon and kissed every spot I could reach. Well, behold the force of evil example. It was only a day later that I found her trying it upon me—as I slept! You know she fans me as I sleep. Poor little thing! She came to me last night—all the trunks were ready, you know—sobbing as if her heart would break. I thought maybe she wanted you. But I told her you did not want her. That was right, wasn't it?"

The artist did not answer at once. The girl raised her voice a little. It had something—just a bit—of the sharpness of a command in it.

"Wasn't that right?"

"Y—yes," said the artist.

But her look was still somewhat belligerent.

"Yes, that was—right," he said.

"Of course," said Miss Carroway, very heartily now. "You don't want her, and she don't want you. It is no use to mince matters, you are too ugly for a little divinity like Jewel. And she is too fine for you. I told her that. But she would not be comforted, and at last I took her into my arms. The poor little thing cuddled up to me and went to sleep."

"Yes," breathed the artist—"yes."

"Of course you don't want her. And we do—so very much. How we ever got along without her is now a mystery to me. Everybody—absolutely everybody—loves her! Why, papa lets her clean his coats—and he is very particular about his clerical coats—very, I can assure you. The kind that button all the way up. And really, since mamma taught her how to do her hair she will have no one else. And as for me, she is my other self. I'll tell her I asked you and you said you didn't want her. Well, did I say good-by? Oh, yes. No use to repeat the stupid business."

She was at the entrance. From there she waved her hand and smiled and was gone.

XXXV.

SHE WENT—LOOKING BACK.

THEN began a curious kind of waiting for him. He did not quite understand it. Presently he knew that he waited for Jewel. It is true that he had said he did not want her—under compulsion. But he knew that he did. And so did she. He had told her that. He wanted to talk to her about the pink-face. That was his need of her now. Two—three days he sat almost motionless and waited, watching the shoji which she had moved the night of her illness. But she did not come.

On the fourth day the shoji did indeed part. But it was Yasakuzi who entered. He carried a naked sword. There was the ferocity of a beast in his face. The artist did not move. Yasakuzi stopped—one hand on the shoji, the other shaking on the sword. The artist looked straight at him, and the questioning in his eyes changed to a smile. And that changed to a brief look of scorn.

"What does the noble warrior, Yasakuzi, wish? Is it my life? Come and take it. Is it my belongings? They are here. If he but

comes forward he shall have either—nay, both. To-day they are both worthless."

Yasakuji lowered his sword and stood at gaze. Presently he said:

"You are not guilty. I know guilt, and it is not in your face, deluded one."

"I am guilty of anything you wish," grinned the dwarf.

"Yes," said the 'riki'-man, relaxing weakly against the walls, "you are guilty of much, but not of this."

"Oh, of everything! But specify the particular offence, and I will confess it, whatever it be."

Yasakuji gripped his sword again.

"Then you did send her to America?"

"Yes," laughed his friend; "but who?"

"Jewel—with the pink-face."

The dwarf leaped upon him like a hound.

"She has gone," gasped Yasakuji.

The dwarf wrenched the sword from him.

"It is a lie. She, the pink-face, has gone, but not Jewel!"

"She has gone," repeated Yasakuji, cowering away from the eyes before him.

Marushida pushed him away, and he fell without the shoji. For a moment he stood over him with the sword in air. Then he flung it away.

"Go," he cried, "you craven beast, go, or I will kill you. You who are dying yet afraid of death! You let her go—not I. You knew I did not. Now! Go and never let me see your evil face again."

He ran to the house of Ali-San.

"Who," he demanded fiercely of the man who was cleaning, "has gone? Quick!—tell me!"

The man looked at him, laughed, and turned to his work without a word. He knew the artist.

"Who? I say. If you do not speak at once——"

"Take care to be a little more polite," growled the huge laborer before him, "or you may learn nothing."

Then the artist whined.

"For the sake of all the gods of luck, tell me where my little Jewel has gone?"

"Your Jewel?" the man laughed odiously. The attitude of both of them was well known. "She is a Jewel. You are a pig. How she ever came to choose you the gods alone know. But, having chosen you, you behaved to her—like a pig."

"But——"

The man stopped and faced him savagely.

"They are gone—all of them! The Fox-Woman and her smirking

parents and their victim. If it were not for her I should rejoice to the gods that they had gone never to return, with their religion of tears."

The artist wished to know something more.

"Well, hasten, then," chided the man.

"Did—did she go willingly?"

"She went looking back—looking back to the last moment. She was ill, too ill to walk. They took her in a kago. But she went looking back. Now, go. I have work to do. Thank all the gods, it shall be done well. I shall sweep out of the house all they left—even of memories. And you had better hope that the next tenants will not have faces of pink. In that case I will have less—much less—to clean."

He laughed odiously and turned to his work.

XXXVI.

THE STATUETTE THAT LEARNED TO SPEAK.

It was very long. And time to the little artist halted now. Yasekuji had disappeared, and there was little to remind him of the fool's paradise in which he had lived besides the statuette. This he never touched. But day by day it sat there and stared at him and he at it until it became sentient. Then he began to converse with it. And, curiously enough, in some fashion it began to speak. Presently they began to have long conversations about all the things he had not dared to talk with Ali-San. And they grew sometimes to be quite gay and intimate. It was a most curious personification. Nearly all of his time was now spent before the grim statuette. And then, presently, he knew that he no longer worshipped her God, but that thing. For he saw every day and all day, with the rich fancy of his artistic nature, not the thing itself, but her fingers touching the clay. The beautifully corrugated marks of her thumb were everywhere. He examined these with his glass now and then, and always found them more beautiful. And at such and such a place he could remember the things in her face as she made the impressions. Here she had glanced perpetually from it to him—then she had laughed. Here she had drawn her eyebrows together impatiently and flung the cloth over the thing. Here she had viciously jabbed her tool into the clay and left it. And here was the last thing she had done—that fearful upward curving of the eyes and mouth. He did not so much care to remember how she looked then. She had laughed, but he had not liked her laugh. So it came about that, presently, he remembered only what was pleasantest—when her laugh was kind and her voice was rich. But most of all he could see her hands—

he could see them when the night had fallen. But, curiously, with it all was Jewel. She was somehow always present. True, it was in the background, where he could only see the shadowy outline. But once in a while by straining he could catch the sound of her voice. Not often did he try. But there was something very sweet in her small voice—sweet and patient. He did not wish entirely to forget it. And then, once in a great while, he could feel her creeping upon him, feel her dainty head in the hollow of his arm, feel her hands slip into his, hear her soft breathing. And sometimes he would dream of her. Then he would wake and find the world more vast and cold than before.

And presently he remembered many sweet and pleasant things of Jewel, and thought often of her and saw her more plainly. And so she won her way with him slowly, till one day he longed for her! But that passed.

The children knew, too, that she was gone. They missed her in their peepings from the house of Ali-San. But they did not know whither she had gone. So they came once more peeping at the house of the little artist. And one day he got one of them in with some sweetmeats.

"Go and tell all the children," he said to this one, "that I shall teach them of that love of God of which Jewel taught, quite as she did. Tell them to come to me just as they came to her. Tell them it shall all be the same, that she wishes it so. Tell them that Jewel has gone away across the west ocean. She is as one dead. Therefore shall we pity her and care for her as one dead, and remember her in our hearts."

The next day the same little one came with two other adventurous ones who liked sweetmeats. And presently, to his urging, there were about twenty. He tried desperately to keep them—it grew more and more lonely. But it was a failure. They cared less and less for his sweetmeats, and one by one they dropped off and he was once more alone.

"Even to them I am a lie," he thought. "Even to them—without Jewel—I am crooked like the little statue. Even to them I am without a soul."

XXXVII.

NO MORE PAINTING—NOR ANY MORNING-GLORIES.

AND there was to be no more painting—nor any morning-glories—for Marushida. It was long before he knew this certainly. He wished to paint, he wished to keep his flowers alive because she had wished it. But the power to paint was gone, and the morning-glories had no color or language for him now. The bells of the temple were harsh and the blues of the mountain were nearly always gray now. How could there

The Fox-Woman

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be inspiration there? How could he paint? His soul had gone with her. He must wait till it came back again.

Presently it was more than a year. Suppose she should never come! And how was he to find her in heaven? And could he go there without a soul? She had not told him. But her religion was for the soul—the soul alone. He might die—or she might—while he waited.

That feeling which he had described as being alone in some vastness where horrors fed upon him had come slowly, in spite of his fighting, down upon him. Every day he looked for her—every hour. Every soft and firm footstep was here. So every day and every hour he made for himself the terror of disappointment until it could no longer be borne in sanity. She had asked him to paint. In the morning he would take up his brushes, but in the evening there was nothing but such dashes as he had last seen her make to show for the day. There were still a few morning-glories,—because she had also wished this, but they scarcely opened now. She was not there to see. Nothing which she could not see or hear or touch seemed worth his while. Yet he painfully kept on trying. It was curious how his faculties had deserted him. To him it was simple. She had his soul. He was very glad he had that picture of her on the vase, otherwise he would have had none, for he was certain he could not now have painted it—though it was within somehow. He tried one day, and the result was so frightful that he broke the pottery into small bits and carefully buried them. There had been some semblance of the face, but there was something sinister in it. Yes, she had absorbed his soul and taken it away with her, leaving him nothing but hands and feet, ears and eyes, which moved by instinct, until she should come again.

And, worst of all, it was different and difficult about that religion he had been through such travail to learn.

The successor of the Reverend Doctor Carroway did not much encourage the bizarre dwarf to attend his church. To certain of the members he explained that he tended to levity, with his air and his attire, and thus impaired the dignity of the service and the effectiveness of his work. Well, after a little while, it made no difference to Marushida. It is true that he had continued to go there for a long time after Ali-San's departure because she had with her last words asked him to be good. And this was a part of the way to be good. She had said that he must be very, very good—or else he would be horrid—and he must be, so that when she returned she would have no fault to find with him.

But the place grew more and more chilly until it was shudderingly cold. And one day there was at Ali-San's place at the organ a pink-face girl whose features were all he had been taught to adore. She laughed at him with the utmost frankness. On another day there was

a funeral in the church—a black one. After that he never went. It troubled him greatly that he did not, but it was quite impossible, and, I fear, no one was greatly pained at his continued absence.

And finally the representative of the church to whom Dr. Carroway had delivered his completed work, gave to Marushida from time to time the cold hand of ceremony which chills. So if there had been nothing else to effect it, the great doctrines which he had learned, and something of whose greatness he had appreciated, became dwarfed and lifeless; and, finally, it all drifted out of his mind like water.

XXXVIII.

ONCE MORE YASAKUJI.

HE shut himself more and more in his house with that painted vase and that grewsome sculpture, and more and more within himself, until, when he went out for food, people began to look askance at him, no longer laughing, but in some kind of sinister fear. Sometimes he withdrew from within himself long enough to wonder at this. But he did not know what it meant until Yasakuji one day forced an entrance upon him.

The 'riki'-man simply sat and stared at him until night fell. There was reproach, reproof, and revenge in the stare. At night he left him, saying but one word.

"Fool! fool!"

And this means more in the Japanese language than it does in ours. Somehow Marushida felt tired and weak that night.

Yasakuji came and went now as he pleased, taking down and putting up the amado himself from the outside. And what an object he had become! His eyes glowed like coals; his shrunken skin was stretched to bursting over the sharp bones of his face; his hair was unkempt, and he looked like living death.

One day Marushida, with perhaps a little of the old love, saw all this.

"You are dying," he said.

The 'riki'-man laughed hoarsely.

"So are you."

Marushida started and looked at his own talon-like hands.

"I am unhappy," he said softly, "but not ill."

"You are dying, I say," shouted the 'riki'-man belligerently. "You shall die."

"No," protested Marushida again.

But he trembled and grew cold.

"She has killed us both," Yasakuji went on. Marushida looked up fearfully.

"She?" he questioned with trembling.

"She!" yelled the 'riki'-man with laughter. "She!—the Fox-Woman, with eyes like heaven, with lips like the poppy, with hair like brass,"—he was quoting his friend; his voice was the terrible trill of a sick man,—“with a voice like the temple bells. She! She has withdrawn your soul and lives now upon it. She has killed your brain. She has destroyed your heart. Down there in the treaty-ports there was sometimes talk among the foreigners of broken hearts. I know not what that is, except that there is terror in it. Perhaps it is that. She has taken out your heart like a plaything, and broken it, or lost it, or mislaid it”—he stopped a moment from exhaustion, then he laughed—“mislaid it! Oh, ha, ha! And I laugh because she laughs—always. Do you hear? She has taken your soul and she laughs. Listen! I can hear it now; it comes across the west-ocean; it is in the wind—the waves out there; she laughs!” He tried horribly to imitate her. “Look!” He suddenly flashed the mirror before Marushida's face. He saw the effect of it upon the artist and laughed again—the rattling laugh of the grave.

Marushida shuddered and pushed the glass away.

"Aha," cried his friend, "do you see it now? Is that not white death? Do you see why she laughed? You are a dwarf. You are hideous. Look!" He pointed to the statuette—"Your eyes are crossed. Yet you thought you were one like her! Oh, ha, ha! O fool! Your souls are alike! Oh, ha, ha! You looked inside and stopped laughing, who always laughed! She looked outside and laughed more and more. Do you remember how you used to laugh? How you had no care? How I brought you Jewel to make joy? Where is your hat and cane, and your square coat? That is what the Fox-Woman does, you know—takes the soul, the brain—breaks the heart; and then one dies, and she laughs! laughs! laughs! Oh, yes, when the heart is broken one dies quite as surely as when the lungs are broken." He pounded his chest savagely. Then he was suddenly quite silent.

Darkness had fallen before he knew it, and presently the dwarf knew that his terrible friend had gone. He would never stay after darkness fell. He was afraid of the darkness since his return, just as Marushida was afraid of the vastness.

XXXIX.

WAS SHE A FOX-WOMAN?

HE came the next day. The dwarf had waited for the sudden light which his opening of the amado always made. But it came stealthily that day, as Yasakuji did. He shook with apprehension when it occurred.

The 'riki'-man sat facing him for an hour without a word. Then he suddenly broke out:

"The morning-glories—you let them die. They are the spirits of the augustnesses—yet you let them die! O beast! O devil! She took your soul who had no soul. She greedily took those of all your ancestors. How will you account for them to Shaka?"

Marushida looked mechanically towards the confusion in the garden. He had not thought of it or them for months.

"And the painting. That was your title to heaven. *You* did not paint! No! *You!*" He raised his voice scornfully. "Such a hell's thing as you! No, it was the souls of the augustnesses who painted with your hands. You can no longer paint. She has taken their souls and you have lost your title to heaven—your right to travel the road to the Meido."

"There is another heaven," said the dwarf. But doubt made the words tremble on his lips. "*She* will be there—and *I*. I shall meet her there. I shall know her hands and eyes and hair. I do not—I do not"—he hesitated and then said it with the same doubt—"I do not fear to die."

The 'riki'-man laughed till the shoji rattled in their grooves.

"You lie!" he said. "You are a murderer."

"I am a Christian," said the artist.

But the hideousness of the grin on the face before him made him dizzy.

"Again you lie!" cried the 'riki'-man. "Oh, ha, ha, ha! *I* may not look at her, *I* may not speak to her, *I* may not touch her—she is divine; *my* touch is defilement—oh, ha, ha, ha! And she has damned you. She has killed us both and damned you. I shall, perhaps, go to Shaka's bosom. But you!—oh, *you* are damned forever! You cannot go to the Meido, for you are not Shaka's. You cannot go to this new heaven, for you are not—what is it you call Him? He saves souls. You have none! she has taken it. *You!*"—he smote ferociously upon the floor with both his hands—"you are forever damned! For you alone in all the world there is no heaven."

Then, again, he laughed horridly.

The dwarf shuddered into a heap on the floor.

"Shall I tell you who is your new Shaka—your eternal friend?"

With a maniacal leap he raped the vase from the tokonoma and held it up before the artist. Marushida slowly raised his eyes. The purple ones on the vase looked into his own merrily. The lips were red as he had seen them that first day. The brazen hair had those tints of the morning he remembered. Oh, it was all divinely beautiful! All that first day came back upon him. And the other days followed.

"Your goddess has no soul."

Marushida started and grew pale.

"Even then you—you, who adored her—painted her without a soul," whispered Yasakuji, "if you could but see it. But the Fox-Woman makes her victims see what she will."

The dwarf slowly shook his head. His eyes were answering the purple ones once more. Death fled from his face and peace came there, and a smile. He reached out gently for the vase.

"She has damned you!" hissed Yasakuji, withdrawing the vase a little. "A deity without a soul!"

Marushida's hands still followed the vase. He smiled a little more.

"And if so," he said, "I am content—with what I have had. Give me the vase, I pray you, and go."

"She has damned you!"

"It is our souls which love and hate—and—" he could almost laugh now—"and our souls are alike."

"But she has yours, and you have none to love or hate with, to present to Shaka or any other deity. How then will you get to heaven?—our heaven? Listen! Here is the truth. I too am damned. Yes." His eyes lit up insanely. "I tried to kill her—her without a soul. Tried to kill her! How can a thing without a soul die? Can a stone die?—or brass?—or iron? With these hands I tried to kill the soulless one!" He held them out frenziedly. "In the vast and mighty darkness of the west I went to her where she lives. It is a mighty city set upon a hundred hills. I walked, crawled when I could not walk, begged, stole, robbed—robbed the poor like I myself—to come to her. And when I came she laughed and said that Jewel had gone, that she got ill and useless, and then she tired of her. That she grew sad, and then she hated her. That she wept, and then she sent her to an hospital—to die. And she is dead. Nothing could I find of her—she is dead. Yes, I had my hands on her white throat. I might yet touch her, oh, ha, ha! I laughed into her eyes of purple as I thought she died. But first I haunted her with this devil's face of mine. It was at her window when she put out the light for sleep. It was at her door when she rose to go out. It met her in dark places with a grin which she knew. And then came the time when I saw her sleep and swore that she should never

wake. Then came the time when I watched till her eyelids closed and entered and put my hand on her throat. It was dark then. And she spoke not nor breathed after I put these hands on her—these are the hands. I could almost see the eyes close—those eyes of purple you adored. I could not see the pallor of death creep up, up, up, up, it was dark—but I felt her heart stop, her face grow cold, and all her body slacken in the hold of death. Then, all in the darkness, I spread her brazen hair upon the pillow, laid her limbs straight, crossed her hands upon her breast, as they do in America, as they had done for my Jewel—my Jewel!—and left her there—left her in the darkness. But as I went she laughed—O gods! laughed! I thought it was her ghost and would have hastened. But the white hands I had thought dead, were on my own throat, and the lips I thought had grown stony laughed! I should have waited till the red had gone out of her lips, till her limbs had grown stony, till the stench of decay was upon her before I moved my hands. But she was stronger than I. With one hand she flung me upon the floor, with the other she touched a button in the wall and there was a great light. She had her foot upon my throat. I see it now. It was soft and pink and pleasant smelling. But with that upon my throat I died there, and lived again to know that I was in prison. She laughed as she told before the judges of her ‘killing,’ her shamming death—as you have seen her laugh. And then I told how I had wished to kill her who had no soul, how she was the Fox-Woman, how she had killed you and me and my Jewel, and devoured our souls, aye, and would kill others yet; and then they all laughed and sent me back to the prison to work, to work till I could scarce breathe, and then to turn me out and drive me thence. Now let us die, as in The Red Bridal of old, for, lo, I love you yet, and then the will of the gods shall be completed and we shall enter upon another life—alas! we know not what now. And perhaps we may meet my little Jewel waiting for us in the Meido. And she may plead with Shaka that we be not damned. Come”—he tendered the sword he held—“come, let us die—you first, then I.”

“I will not die,” said the artist curtly. “Die you, if you will. And do not again say ‘My Jewel.’ She was mine.”

“Yes, yours. But first she was mine. I gave you the only fruit of my loins that you might be a little happier—my little daughter. I gave you her young joy and beauty, and I went home to loneliness and sleeplessness—loneliness and sleeplessness and slow-coming death. I knew that I must die, and I gave her to you, and you gave her to the Fox-Woman to be killed—to be devoured—to the vampire-girl. Her soul—your soul—mine. O Jewel! the one flower, the one morning-glory of my sad life. Come, let us die in the old, old fashion. Life is now no longer worth our care. Come, let us die, and our little Jewel

may plead for us for another life—perhaps more than one. She is there in the vast Meido—she will hold out her hand to us—come!”

The artist snarled angrily:

“Get you a doctor to mend your brain,” he said heartlessly. “It is bad enough. Make it not worse. If I had known she was yours——”

“Then,” said the sick man calmly, “I shall kill you—first you, then myself. It is all we can do—die because we have killed them. You shall die first, then——”

Then he saw the statuette. And, searching with his eyes a little, he found the vase with the portrait upon it. Something impotently ferocious smote through his gray mask of a face. He rose staggeringly and leaped at the vase.

“But first these. She shall destroy no more souls, even by her painted face—and yours. For these do it too.”

He had the vase, and as he raised it aloft he cried with insane glee:

“Aye, look your last on it. For by all the gods in heaven——”

The dwarf sprang at his throat and fastened his fingers there. They fell together. When the artist rose Yasakuji lay quite still.

XL

AND JOY SHALL SING AGAIN—BUT SADLY.

THE act of homicide had cleared his brain. He shuddered as he looked down at his lifelong friend. All at once he understood what he had done for him—what he had been to him. An immense remorse seized him. He stooped to the heart: it had ceased to beat, and a crimson froth was oozing from the parted lips.

“Yes, at last I am a murderer,” he whispered, as if some one were by to hear.

The vase was in pieces on the floor. On one of them, uninjured, the face of Ali-San smiled up at him—just as he had first seen it—sacredly, radiantly. He was about to set his foot upon it. But he paused, shivering. It was like bruising her flesh. He threw it into the little pond in the garden. But even then he fancied that the face still smiled up at him—a little mockingly now through the waves it had made. He went back and got the statuette and threw that into the pond. It stood nearly upright—he thought it grimacing at him out of the distorted eyes she had made. He went back to the dead man, feeling the edge of his sword as he went, loosing a little his haori at the neck. The low murmur of a human voice reached him before he could see. Jewel was there, prone upon the ground, her arms outstretched upon her father.

her head buried upon him. Marushida paused, drooping, upon the doorway. The sword dropped rattling from his hand. The girl did not look up; it is doubtful if she heard it.

Silence, a few sobs, and then he felt that she was looking at him. When he raised his head their eyes met. In hers was something he had never seen there before. Irresistibly he came to her till he knelt on the other side of the poor body. She looked at him long. But presently she held out her hands that he might see them. They were still worn and rugged with toil.

"For me," he whispered.

"For you," she said.

She lifted to him her faded kimono, more faded now.

And again he said:

"For me."

"For you," she said once more.

Her head drooped slowly forward, her arms outstretched themselves over the body of her father. "For you," she sobbed.

"For me," he answered and took the hands. There was no response, no invitation in them now. He put them down very softly and rose. Back he went stealthily to the door. He took up the sword and would have passed out, but he felt her hand take his.

He looked backward, but she led him forth, speaking softly:

"Yes, I give you my hands, but it is not the old fashion. Something is gone. I know you are crooked now. But I am your wife, that is why—that is only why. All are dead but you and I. Ah, how ill that sounds! There is but one dead. And for him we need not mourn. There is another life for him. I wish that there might be for us."

"There shall be," said her husband, in a voice whose sweetness she had almost forgotten, "if you will."

She turned and looked sadly upon him.

"It is too late," she said.

"Not for the great American God," he said, "nor for one as sweet and forgiving as you."

She had nothing to answer to that. She irresolutely faced him. He understood, somehow, that she would never be quite the same joyous being she had been. And he understood that this too had been sacrificed by—for him.

"I am no longer dainty," she said sorrowfully, "and I care little to be so."

"You are sacred now," he said, bowing over her hand.

A tear dropped on it.

Something which she had thought dead moved within her.

"What do you wish?" she asked, as a Japanese wife would.

"You," he said.

And stooping again, he kissed her hands.

It was the first time. No one had ever before kissed her hands. The thing within which had moved before fluttered now. It was the human touch. Then it sang. She snatched her hands away and put them to her breast. Her husband did not understand. He kept his head down.

"Ani-San, kiss my lips," she cried.

He thought he knew all the tones of her voice. But this one he had never heard. He looked unbelievably up.

"Ani-San, kiss my lips!"

THE END.

THE SALON IN OLD PHILADELPHIA

BY ANNE HOLLINGSWORTH WHARTON

Author of "Through Colonial Doorways," "Colonial Days and Dames," etc.

TO provide a meeting place for the discussion of literature, art, science, and legislation, and to lead and shine in such a circle, has always been the ambition of a certain class of superior women. From that far-away period in French life when *la belle Arthénice* and her daughter Julie held sway in the Hotel Rambouillet, down to our own time, there have been more or less successful attempts to found salons on both sides of the water.

The first symptom of the salon movement in America is to be found in the circle that Miss Elizabeth Graeme gathered about her at her father's house in Philadelphia and at his country-seat, Graeme Park, in Montgomery County. Elizabeth Graeme, afterwards Mrs. Hugh Ferguson, is the "cat Ferguson" at whose expense Dr. Mitchell's "Aunt Gainer" so frequently sharpened her wits. It is only fair to say that the character drawn by the novelist is not from life, as Mrs. Ferguson was a woman of lovable and gentle nature, despite her keen wit and marked personality. A student, a linguist, and a poetess of considerable charm, she was during the latter half of the century easily the most learned woman in the Colonies. To the small circle of her own city she was known through her contributions to the *Pennsylvania Packet* and to the *Columbia Magazine*. Miss Graeme's most extensive work was the translating of Fénelon's *Aventures de Télémaque* into English verse, which was undertaken when the translator was about twenty-one years of age. This translation of *Télémaque* was never published, but the manuscript, carefully preserved, is in the possession of the Philadelphia Library Company, a lasting memorial to the industry and intelligence of this remarkable young woman. In 1764, when about twenty-five years of age, Miss Graeme sailed for Europe under the care of the Reverend Richard Peters, rector of the united parishes of Christ Church and St. Peter's. While abroad she visited England, was presented at the Court of George III., and was warmly welcomed by her father's relations in Scotland, where her own cousin, Thomas Graeme, of Balgowan, gave her the family coat of arms and with it his own book-plate, which she afterwards used herself. This is probably the first book-plate used in America by a woman.

In London Miss Graeme numbered among her friends the celebrated Dr. John Fothergill and the Honorable Thomas and Lady Juliana Penn, both of whom had shown their interest in the advancement of learning in Pennsylvania by sending gifts to a circulating library at





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The fox-woman

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